



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



THURSDAY — 14 JAN 2021

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## Event Calendar

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Covid cases continue to spike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/coronavirus/washington-state-reports-49-new-covid-19-deaths-as-cases-continue-increasing">https://komonews.com/news/coronavirus/washington-state-reports-49-new-covid-19-deaths-as-cases-continue-increasing</a>
GIST	<p>COVID-19 cases in Washington are continuing to spike as health officials report almost 50 more deaths from the virus.</p> <p>State health officials reported 2,658 new COVID-19 cases, 12 additional hospitalizations and 49 more deaths in the last 24 hours. In the last two days alone <a href="#">139 people have died from a COVID-19 infection</a>, according to the Washington Department of Health.</p> <p>That brings Washington's numbers to 281,202 total cases, 16,080 hospitalizations, and 3,838 deaths since the pandemic began.</p> <p>Following Christmas and New Year's Eve, Snohomish County set a <a href="#">record in the amount of cases reported in one day in the county</a> and, according to Katie Curtis with Snohomish Health District, "Unfortunately, for the second week, we've seen another increase in our case rates."</p> <p>The health department said Wednesday's total case counts include up to 520 duplicate cases because of incomplete data.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Court blocks injection site; stymies Seattle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/court-rules-against-seattles-efforts-for-supervised-injection-sites-for-heroin-users">https://komonews.com/news/local/court-rules-against-seattles-efforts-for-supervised-injection-sites-for-heroin-users</a>
GIST	<p>Seattle's efforts to create a supervised consumption site for heroin users to inject under the eyes of a nurse received a setback Tuesday.</p> <p>In a 2-1 vote, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled a consumption site in Philadelphia could not open because it would violate federal drug laws.</p> <p>The supporters of opening a site in Seattle are hopeful a Biden administration with a democratically control congress will make it easier to open one legally.</p> <p>In its ruling, US Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas called the motives by Safehouse, the non-profit hoping to open the site 'admirable, but Congress has made it a crime to open a property to others to use drugs.'</p> <p>Seattle/King County Public Health green lighted supervised injection sites, known as CHel's, Community Health Engagement Locations three years ago.</p> <p>But an effort to find a fixed location like the ones in British Columbia run by Insite failed.</p> <p>An effort to create mobile sites, an RV that can go where needed stalled.</p> <p>In November, the Seattle City Council approved more than \$1.1 million to facilitate existing locations that provide services to drug users like the Aurora Commons in North Seattle with the staffing to be a consumption site.</p>

The City has been waiting to see how the court would rule in the Philadelphia case before moving forward.

"We were anticipating this could happen," Mayor Jenny Durkan said when asked a question about the ruling during a Tuesday news conference. "This is another wrinkle we are going to have to deal with."

Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes, a supporter of harm reduction techniques said "As cities struggle to respond to overdoses wrought by the opioid epidemic, the ruling is a disappointing one"

"The Court's decision re-affirms that 'safe' injection sites are a violation of federal law," said Acting Attorney General Jeffrey A. Rosen said in a press release on Wednesday. "The Department supports efforts to curb the opioid crisis ravaging this country, but injection sites are not the solution."

But supporters of sites are looking to a change in philosophy with a new administration and a new Congress.

Two years ago, the US Attorney for Western Washington and Trump nominee Brian Moran warn Seattle not to pursue a site saying violated federal law.

"The direction will be clear, quick and consistent, stop it" he told KOMO News. A spokesperson for Moran and said his attitude toward consumption sites hasn't changed.

But Moran could be out of a job soon. Traditionally, new US Attorneys are selected by the President, especially when another political party takes over.

Jesse Rawlins of the Yes to SCS coalition is hopeful Durkan will move forward with 'authority' to create sites regardless of the court ruling.

He is hopeful the Biden Administration will treat injectable illegal drugs like heroin the way the Obama administration allowed states to allow for marijuana sales.

"I'm hoping there will be sites all across the country," Rawlins said. "The Biden administration won't enforce different provisions of federal and hopefully with a new Congress, we can have some progressive policy change happen."

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HEADLINE	01/13 Shots given? Rank bottom half of states
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/washington-ranks-in-bottom-half-of-states-for-vaccine-doses-administered">https://www.q13fox.com/news/washington-ranks-in-bottom-half-of-states-for-vaccine-doses-administered</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - Washington ranks in the bottom half of states when it comes to the percentage of doses used, according to CDC data Wednesday. The state health secretary admitted the <a href="#">vaccine response</a> has been "uneven at best."</p> <p>The ranking, 26th to be exact, comes as the federal government warns states to speed up the pace of giving vaccines or risk getting fewer doses in the future.</p> <p>According to CDC data, Washington state has administered about 36% of the doses it has received, a hair above the national average of 35%. But the state ranks in the bottom third when it comes to the percentage of the population vaccinated so far at 2.7%. The national average is 3.1%.</p> <p>In a media briefing, health officials vowed to do better and more to get vaccines out quicker, and announced plans to open up the next phase in the vaccine order in the coming days.</p>

Phase 1B1 includes all people in the state ages 70 and older and all people ages 50 and older who live in multigenerational households. Despite new federal guidance to immediately open up vaccines to all people ages 65 and older and those of any age with comorbidities, the state so far has not changed its planned phases.

State Health Secretary Dr. Umair Shah said the new guidance gives him pause.

"If you don't have enough vaccines what you're doing essentially is opening up - if it's a queue or a line - you're making the line longer, but you're not actually helping people get vaccines because there's not enough supply," Shah said.

He said he's calling on the federal government to work harder to get the supply in the hands of states. Despite the federal government vowing not to hold back any vaccines for second doses to speed up and increase delivery, Shah said the state has not seen an increase in expected supply for next week.

"Our speed limit is the number of vaccines on a consistent basis coming into the state," Shah said. "When we do not have that enhanced system, then we do not have the ability to plan for this bigger initiative, because we don't have enough of that vaccine there."

Health officials said the federal government continues to only give them expected shipments a week in advance. Acting Assistant Secretary Michele Roberts, who is in charge of the COVID-19 vaccine response, said the state has now ramped up to administering roughly the same number of doses per day that the weekly doses would provide, if divided up over seven days.

In Snohomish County, health officials said Tuesday they are on pace to run out of vaccines by the middle of next week if a new shipment does not come in. The county has set up drive-thru sites to vaccinate health care workers in the first phase.

"It sometimes appears as though it's not happening that quickly but it's a very targeted group for a very specific reason and that's to take pressure off of the health care system and to protect those providers," said Snohomish County Emergency Manager Jason Biermann. "So it's going to roll out slowly knowing that we're trying to purposefully target a small population at the start."

With a new phase in the state opening soon, Roberts urged health care workers who have yet to be vaccinated to make an appointment right away before the next priority group enters the queue.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Wind warnings: 105mph gust in Wyoming</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2021/01/13/wind-warnings-colorado-utah-wyoming-montana-weather/4154524001/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2021/01/13/wind-warnings-colorado-utah-wyoming-montana-weather/4154524001/</a>
GIST	<p>Hurricane-force winds across Wyoming stopped Union Pacific trains on Wednesday. A wind record set in 2014 fell at Billings Logan International Airport in Montana.</p> <p>The winds won't let up on Thursday.</p> <p>Powerful gusts projected to top 70 mph are in store from Colorado, Idaho and Montana to the Dakotas, Wyoming, Nebraska and Utah, prompting wind warnings through Friday, <a href="#">according to the National Weather Service</a>.</p> <p>The same high and low pressure combinations contributing to those winds were responsible for a powerful storm on Wednesday in the Pacific Northwest. With an atmospheric river bringing 10 inches of rain to Washington and Oregon, that storm left a trail of damage – <a href="#">killing one person and causing a highway to shut down after a landslide</a>.</p>

More than 300,000 people [were still without power](#) in Oregon and Washington on Wednesday night, and the NWS has warned of a continued risk of landslides in the region.

In Wyoming, the NWS in Cheyenne reported a 105-mph gust near F.E. Warren Air Force Base and 16 other gusts of 80 mph or more in the last 12 hours.

The winds were so extreme that Union Pacific stopped trains between North Platte, Nebraska, and Green River, Wyoming, "until it is safe to resume service," [according to a statement on its website](#).

In Montana, the NWS in Billings reported a gust of 68 mph at the airport, breaking a record set on the same day seven years ago. "January 13th is officially #WindDay in Billings," [the weather service said on Twitter](#).

Damaging winds of 60 mph or stronger are a common in Montana and Wyoming, but aren't especially common over the Rocky Mountains, said Dave Bowers, senior meteorologist for Accuweather.

Heading into the weekend, drivers should be careful when operating vehicles, Bowers said, adding that people across the region should also tie down lightweight outdoor objects such as garbage cans.

Winds on Thursday will also bring a risk of fire danger to portions of New Mexico, Southern California, and west Texas, because of a combination of breezy conditions and heat. Some gusts could top 50 mph across Los Angeles and Ventura counties, the weather service said.

Meanwhile, a developing storm is forecast to bring considerable snow into Minnesota on Thursday and Friday, with up to 12 inches expected in Duluth, Bowers said. Windy conditions in the Upper Midwest are likely to cause near blizzard conditions.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/14 Infection immunity; but still can spread</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-immunity/covid-19-infection-gives-some-immunity-but-virus-can-still-be-spread-study-finds-idUSKBN29J004">https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-immunity/covid-19-infection-gives-some-immunity-but-virus-can-still-be-spread-study-finds-idUSKBN29J004</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - People who have had COVID-19 are highly likely to have immunity to it for at least five months, but there is evidence that those with antibodies may still be able to carry and spread the virus, a study of British healthcare workers has found.</p> <p>Preliminary findings by scientists at Public Health England (PHE) showed that reinfections in people who have COVID-19 antibodies from a past infection are rare - with only 44 cases found among 6,614 previously infected people in the study.</p> <p>But experts cautioned that the findings mean people who contracted the disease in the first wave of the pandemic in the early months of 2020 may now be vulnerable to catching it again.</p> <p>They also warned that people with so-called natural immunity - acquired through having had the infection - may still be able carry the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in their nose and throat and could unwittingly pass it on.</p> <p>"We now know that most of those who have had the virus, and developed antibodies, are protected from reinfection, but this is not total and we do not yet know how long protection lasts," said Susan Hopkins, senior medical adviser at PHE and co-leader of the study, whose findings were published on Thursday.</p> <p>"This means even if you believe you already had the disease and are protected, you can be reassured it is highly unlikely you will develop severe infections. But there is still a risk you could acquire an infection and transmit (it) to others."</p>

## MAJOR IMPLICATIONS

Experts not directly involved in the research, which is known as the SIREN study, urged people to note its key findings.

“These data reinforce the message that, for the time being, everyone is a potential source of infection for others and should behave accordingly,” said Eleanor Riley, a professor of immunology and infectious disease at Edinburgh University.

Simon Clarke, an associate professor in cellular microbiology at Reading University, said the study “has major implications for how we can get out of the current crisis”.

“This means that the vast majority of the population will either need to have natural immunity or have been immunised for us to fully lift restrictions on our lives, unless we are prepared to see many more people being infected and dying from COVID-19,” he said.

PHE said in a statement that the study had not been able to explore antibody or other immune responses to the COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out in Britain. Vaccine effects would be studied as part of SIREN later this year, it said.

The SIREN study involves tens of thousands of healthcare workers in Britain who have been tested regularly since June for new COVID-19 infections as well as for the presence of antibodies.

Between June 18 and Nov. 24, scientists found 44 potential reinfections - two “probable” and 42 “possible” - among 6,614 participants who had tested positive for antibodies. This represents an 83% rate of protection from reinfection, they said.

The researchers said they would continue to follow the participants to see if this natural immunity might last longer than five months in some. But they said early evidence from the next stage of the study suggested some people with immunity could still carry high levels of virus.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/14 Europe uses curfews to fight virus</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/international-news-europe-coronavirus-pandemic-france-economy-0bf7ee470baca48c9f189acc4d4ef0a5">https://apnews.com/article/international-news-europe-coronavirus-pandemic-france-economy-0bf7ee470baca48c9f189acc4d4ef0a5</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — As the wan winter sun sets over France’s Champagne region, the countdown clock kicks in.</p> <p>Laborers stop pruning the vines as the light fades at about 4:30 p.m., leaving them 90 minutes to come in from the cold, change out of their work clothes, hop in their cars and zoom home before a 6 p.m. coronavirus curfew.</p> <p>Forget about any after-work socializing with friends, after-school clubs for children or doing any evening shopping beyond quick trips for essentials. Police on patrol demand valid reasons from people seen out and about. For those without them, the threat of mounting fines for curfew-breakers is increasingly making life outside of the weekends all work and no play.</p> <p>“At 6 p.m., life stops,” says Champagne producer Alexandre Prat.</p> <p>Trying to fend off the need for a third nationwide lockdown that would further dent Europe’s second-largest economy and put more jobs in danger, France is instead opting for creeping curfews. Big chunks of eastern France, including most of its regions that border Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, face 6 p.m.-to-6 a.m. restrictions on movement.</p>

The rest of France could quickly follow suit, losing two extra hours of liberty that have been just enough for residents to maintain bare-bones social lives.

Until a couple of weeks ago, the nightly curfew didn't kick in until 8 p.m. in Prat's region, the Marne. Customers still stopped to buy bottles of his family's bubbly wines on their way home, he said. But when the cut-off time was advanced to 6 p.m. to slow viral infections, the drinkers disappeared.

"Now we have no one," Prat said.

The village where retiree Jerome Brunault lives alone in the Burgundy wine region is also in one of the 6 p.m. curfew zones. The 67-year-old says his solitude weighs more heavily without the opportunity for early evening drinks, nibbles and chats with friends, the so-called "apero" get-togethers so beloved by the French that were hurried but still feasible when curfew started two hours later.

"With the 6 p.m. curfew, we cannot go to see friends for a drink anymore," Brunault said. "I now spend my days not talking to anyone except for the baker and some people by phone."

Imposing a 6 p.m. curfew nationwide is among options the French government is considering in response to rising infections and the spread of a particularly contagious virus variant that has swept across Britain, where new infections and virus deaths have soared.

Prime Minister Jean Castex could announce a curfew extension Thursday evening, as well as other restrictions, to fight the virus in a country that has seen over 69,000 confirmed virus deaths.

An earlier curfew combats virus transmission "precisely because it serves to limit social interactions that people can have at the end of the day, for example in private homes," French government spokesman Gabriel Attal says.

Overnight curfews have become the norm in swaths of Europe but the 6 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew in 25 regions of eastern France is the most restrictive anywhere in the European Union's 27 nations. Others countries' curfews all start later and often finish earlier.

The curfew in Italy runs from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., as does the Friday night to Sunday morning curfew in Latvia. Regions of Belgium that speak French have a 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew while in Belgium's Dutch-speaking region, the hours are midnight to 5 a.m.

People out between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. in Hungary must be able to show police written proof from their employers that they are either working or commuting.

There are no curfews in Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden, Poland or the Netherlands, although the Dutch government is thinking about whether imposing a curfew would slow new COVID-19 cases.

In France, critics of the 6 p.m. curfew say the earlier time actually crams people together more after work, when they pile onto public transportation, clog roads and shop for groceries in a narrow rush-hour window before they must be home.

Women's rugby coach Felicie Guinot says negotiating rush-hour traffic in Marseille has become a nightmare. The city in southern France is among the places where the more contagious virus variant has started to flare.

"It's a scramble so everyone can be home by 6 p.m.," Guinot said.

In historic Besançon, the fortified city that was the hometown of "Les Misérables" author Victor Hugo, music store owner Jean-Charles Valley says the 6 p.m. deadline means people no longer drop by after work to play with the guitars and other instruments that he sells. Instead, they rush home.



	<p>“People are completely demoralized,” Valley said.</p> <p>In Dijon, the French city known for its pungent mustard, working mother of two Celine Bourdin says her life has narrowed to “dropping kids at school and going to work, then going back home, helping kids with homework and preparing dinner.”</p> <p>But even that cycle is better than a repeat of France’s lockdown at the start of the pandemic, when schools also closed, Bourdin says.</p> <p>“If my children don’t go to school, it means I cannot work anymore,” she said. “It was terribly difficult to be all stuck almost 24 hours a day in the house.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Traffic deaths up despite lockdowns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-health-traffic-coronavirus-pandemic-799e455b73902b1638cc2ac46a172972">https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-health-traffic-coronavirus-pandemic-799e455b73902b1638cc2ac46a172972</a>
GIST	<p>DETROIT (AP) — The number of people killed on the nation’s highways rose 4.6% in the first nine months of 2020 despite coronavirus lockdowns that curtailed driving early in the year.</p> <p>The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 28,190 people died in traffic crashes from January through September of last year, up from 26,941 in the same period of 2019. Final statistics for the full year won’t come out until fall.</p> <p>Authorities blamed the increase on risky driving behavior that developed when there were few vehicles on the road early in the pandemic.</p> <p>“Preliminary data tells us that during the national health emergency, fewer Americans drove, but those who did took more risks and had more fatal crashes,” the safety agency said in a letter addressed to the nation’s drivers.</p> <p>Traffic deaths rose 0.6% during the first-quarter of 2020, but they fell 1.1% in the second quarter as coronavirus lockdowns restricted movement. Fatalities spiked 13.1% from July through September, the agency said.</p> <p>“We think the big culprit is speeding,” said Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association. Early in the pandemic, drivers found open roads and drove faster. The behavior continued even as traffic volumes recovered, Adkins said.</p> <p>“A big factor here is the lack of enforcement. We are hearing from many states that traffic stops have declined during COVID-19. Drivers feel like they can speed and get away with it,” he said.</p> <p>NHTSA said recent reports show a 22% increase in vehicle speeds in several metropolitan areas over pre-pandemic numbers. Also, a study found that 65% of drivers treated at trauma centers who were hurt in serious crashes had drugs or alcohol in their systems last year. It was 50.6% before the pandemic, NHTSA said. The agency also said fewer people are wearing seat belts.</p> <p>The agency is telling people not to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, to wear seat belts and to reduce their speeds in order to stay safe. It also says people should make sure their children are in the proper car seat for their size.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/13 Defiance of virus dining bans grows
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-dining-defiance-5d72f54a399f028b82aa18f8cde83a10">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-dining-defiance-5d72f54a399f028b82aa18f8cde83a10</a>
GIST	<p>BORING, Ore. (AP) — A line formed out the door during the lunch rush at the Carver Hangar, a family-owned restaurant and sports bar, and waitresses zipped in and out of the kitchen trying to keep up with orders as customers backed up in the lobby.</p> <p>Indoor dining has been banned in much of Oregon for nearly two months, but the eatery 20 miles southeast of Portland was doing a booming business — and an illegal one. The restaurant’s owners, Bryan and Liz Mitchell, fully reopened Jan. 1 in defiance of Democratic Gov. Kate Brown’s COVID-19 indoor dining ban in their county despite the risk of heavy fines and surging coronavirus cases.</p> <p>“We’re not going to back down because our employees still need to eat, they still need that income,” said Bryan Mitchell, as customers ate at tables spaced 6 feet apart. “The statement that we’re making is, ‘Every life is essential. You have the right to survive. Nobody should tell you what you can and cannot do to provide for your family.’”</p> <p>Health officials in Oregon and other states with bans say they are necessary because people can’t wear masks when they eat, are in close proximity in smaller and often poorly ventilated spaces, and are prone to talk more loudly in a crowded dining room — all known contributors to viral spread. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists indoor dining as a “particularly high-risk” activity.</p> <p>But even as coronavirus deaths soar, a growing number of restaurants in states across the country are reopening in defiance of strict COVID-19 rules that have shut them down for indoor dining for weeks, or even months. Restaurants can serve people outside or offer carry-out, but winter weather has crippled revenues from patio dining.</p> <p>In Oregon, an organized effort to get businesses to reopen for indoor service starting Jan. 1 has been championed by several mayors, who formed a group to raise legal defense funds in anticipation of a court fight. Similar revolts in Michigan, Pennsylvania, California and Washington state have also gained traction, with the rule-breakers saying their industry has been unfairly singled out while other businesses, like big box stores and airlines, continue operating.</p> <p>The states with the strictest dining rules are led by Democratic governors and the protests have consequently attracted the support of right-wing groups that, in some cases, have stationed armed individuals at business entrances and organized protests on behalf of owners.</p> <p>In Oregon, protesters targeted the house of an inspector and the department’s top administrator after the state fined a local gym chain, Capitol Racquet Sports Inc., \$90,000. On Tuesday, it added another \$126,749 in fines because four locations were still open.</p> <p>Brown, who currently prohibits indoor dining in 26 of Oregon’s 36 counties, called the move to reopen irresponsible and said it could lead to a spike in infections and deaths. She accused local leaders backing the movement of willfully misleading their communities for political reasons.</p> <p>“We can’t waver in our response to the virus now, when the end is finally in sight and resources are on the way. We are better than this,” said Brown, who banned indoor dining last spring and then reinstated it with limits over the summer before the latest shutdown.</p> <p>In addition to fines, Brown has threatened to pull liquor licenses and ban slot machines at restaurants that won’t stay closed. State inspectors have assembled a priority list of establishments to visit with the goal of stopping the “vocal minority” of owners before the defiance broadens, said Aaron Corvin, spokesman for the Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Administration.</p> <p>It’s impossible to know how many Oregon restaurants have heeded the call to reopen because many are keeping quiet about it. Stan Pulliam, the mayor of Sandy, Oregon, said he attended meetings all over the</p>

state where establishments were encouraged to reopen and said the so-called Open Oregon coalition includes at least 300 small businesses, not all of them restaurants.

Even before the organized effort, restaurants were reopening because they couldn't survive and Pulliam said his goal was to provide a uniform framework to make it safer. He has urged businesses in his town and county to reopen at 25% capacity with a face mask requirement for staff and social distancing.

"These are individuals that are to the end of their rope. Their decision is not to thumb their nose at the governor. It's really a decision to open up or lose everything they've worked for their entire lives," he said. "We're saying, 'Hey, if you're going to open, let's do this right.'"

Restaurant owners who are complying with state closures have watched the movement to reopen with frustration.

"I have a bunch of businesses and bunch of staff who all want to work and I want them to work, but they want to be safe and I want them to be safe — and I want my customers to be safe," said Ezra Caraeff, who owns four bars with food service in Portland and has laid off dozens of employees.

"I have bills to pay, but there's a morality aspect to this."

Some non-compliant businesses have already racked up thousands of dollars in fines from health and safety inspectors. In Washington state, one restaurant has been fined nearly \$145,000 and is challenging a restraining order in court. In Michigan — where a ban on indoor dining was extended Wednesday until at least Feb. 1 — a restaurant industry group sued over the ban and a major Detroit-area restaurateur rallied hundreds of colleagues to reopen last month in violation of state rules before backing down.

In Pennsylvania, the state closed 109 restaurants over violations during a ban on indoor dining that expired Jan. 4 and sued 50 establishments.

Quality Shoppe, a breakfast-and-lunch spot in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, that's been around for over 50 years, was among the restaurants sued. The state is pursuing legal action even though it lifted its ban on indoor dining last week.

"I don't like breaking rules. That's not normally what I want to do," said owner Crystal Nolt, adding she couldn't afford to close again after an initial three-month shutdown last spring. "I don't want people to die. But at some point people also have to live their life."

At the Mitchells' Oregon restaurant, employees are required to wear masks and the ventilation has been updated with high-quality HEPA filters. Those precautions are enough for customers who've flocked to the small town of Boring — population 7,762 — since the Carver Hangar reopened.

So far, the restaurant has not been fined. A handwritten sign taped to the restaurant's door tells inspectors to return with a warrant.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Moderna CEO: will live w/Covid-19 'forever'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/moderna-ceo-says-the-world-will-have-to-live-with-the-coronavirus-forever.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/moderna-ceo-says-the-world-will-have-to-live-with-the-coronavirus-forever.html</a>
GIST	<p>he CEO of Covid-19 vaccine maker <a href="#">Moderna</a> warned Wednesday that the coronavirus that has brought world economies to a standstill and overwhelmed hospitals will be around "forever."</p> <p>Public health officials and infectious disease experts have said there is a high likelihood that Covid-19 will become <a href="#">an endemic disease</a>, meaning it will become present in communities at all times, though likely at lower levels than it is now.</p>

Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel appeared to agree Wednesday that Covid-19 will become endemic, saying “SARS-CoV-2 is not going away.”

“We are going to live with this virus, we think, forever,” he said during a panel discussion at the [JPMorgan](#) Healthcare Conference.

Health officials will have to continuously watch for new variants of the virus, so scientists can produce vaccines to fight them, he said. Researchers in Ohio [said Wednesday](#) they’ve discovered two new variants likely originating in the U.S. and that one of them quickly became the dominant strain in Columbus, Ohio, over a three-week period in late December and early January.

[Pfizer researchers said](#) its vaccine developed with BioNTech appeared to be effective against a key mutation in the U.K. strain as well as [a variant found in South Africa](#).

Moderna’s vaccine [has been authorized](#) by the Food and Drug Administration for use in Americans who are 18 years old and older. Additional studies [still needed to be completed in children](#), whose immune systems can respond differently to vaccines than those of adults.

U.S. officials [are racing to distribute doses](#) of both vaccines, but it will likely take months before the U.S. can vaccinate enough people to achieve herd immunity, meaning the virus won’t have enough new hosts to spread. Still, Bancel said Wednesday he expects the U.S. will be one of the first large countries to achieve “sufficient protection” against the virus.

There are already four coronaviruses that are endemic across the world, but they aren’t as contagious or deadly as Covid-19, according to the World Health Organization.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/14 Survey: NYC renters owe \$1B unpaid rent</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-renters-owe-more-than-1-billion-in-unpaid-rent-survey-finds-11610622000">https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-renters-owe-more-than-1-billion-in-unpaid-rent-survey-finds-11610622000</a>
GIST	<p>New York City apartment tenants are more than \$1 billion in debt from missed rent payments during <a href="#">the coronavirus pandemic</a>, according to a new survey measuring the depth of the rent crisis brought on by Covid-19.</p> <p>The debt figure is the most recent indicator that unemployment benefits and federal stimulus packages have so far been inadequate to alleviate the growing <a href="#">financial burden of missed rent payments</a> across thousands of city households. Both landlord and tenant advocacy groups have lobbied heavily for more government rental assistance during the pandemic.</p> <p>The survey, conducted by the Community Housing Improvement Program, a landlord trade group, focused on New York buildings subject to the city’s rent-regulation laws. These apartments account for about half of the city’s total rental apartments. Tallying responses from landlords, the group estimated that as many as 185,000 households living in these apartments are more than two months behind on rent, with an average debt of more than \$6,000.</p> <p>Jay Martin, executive director of CHIP, said rent debt from the rest of New York’s apartment inventory is probably the same or greater, meaning the total debt New York City renters are carrying is likely more than \$2 billion.</p> <p>“It’s not an insurmountable amount,” Mr. Martin said. “The numbers tell us that, probably, if we could get an additional billion or two dollars in the city, we could probably pay off every single renter’s arrears in the entire city of New York over the last year of the crisis.”</p>

The Covid-19 relief package [passed by Congress in December](#) included \$1.3 billion in pandemic rental assistance for New York state. It is still unclear how much of that will be made available for New York City, however, or how difficult it will be for tenants to meet eligibility requirements for the funds. State and city housing agencies are expected to roll out their distribution plans for the assistance in the coming weeks.

Housing advocates worry that if eligibility guidelines are too strict, much of the money will sit unused as tenant debts grow deeper. Nationally, about \$300 million in federal rental assistance from the spring was still unspent as of December. And in New York, only \$40 million of the state's \$100 million in pledged rental assistance had been spent as of the same month, leading Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, to sign an executive order expanding eligibility.

"It was structured in such a narrow way that it was hard for people to apply and so many were deemed ineligible" said Rachel Fee, executive director of the New York Housing Congress, an affordable-housing group focused on budget issues. "How the state and city target the [new] program is going to be really important."

During the pandemic, most New York renters behind on payments have been saved from evictions by a combination of federal and state laws. In December, Mr. Cuomo [extended New York's eviction moratorium](#) until May 2021. Some landlords, meanwhile, have fallen behind on their mortgages and other obligations, as rent collections reduce to a trickle and replacing nonpaying tenants with ones that can pay isn't an option.

Asking rents for New York apartments have decreased in many neighborhoods during the pandemic, yet rents are still high by national standards. In New York City, the median one-bedroom-apartment rental price is \$2,350, according to listings website Zumper.

Once eviction protections do expire, it could mean a surge in new evictions and other litigation, if rent debts persist.

"The court is not a perfect system but it is the only system we have to adjudicate any relief for tenants [and] any relief for property owners," CHIP's Mr. Martin said.

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HEADLINE	01/14 CDC: 92,000 more deaths 3 weeks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/14/health/us-coronavirus-thursday/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/14/health/us-coronavirus-thursday/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)More than 38,000 Americans <a href="#">have died of Covid-19</a> in the first two weeks of the new year.</p> <p>Another 92,000 are projected to die from the virus over roughly the next three weeks, according to an ensemble forecast published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The numbers are scary and reflect what public health experts have repeatedly warned: <a href="#">While the end is in sight --</a> with the <a href="#">help of ongoing Covid-19 vaccinations</a> -- the nation is still facing challenging times ahead.</p> <p>Currently, more than 130,300 people are hospitalized with the virus, according to data from the <a href="#">COVID Tracking Project</a>.</p> <p>In Pennsylvania, officials said the number of hospitalizations are nearing double the peak experienced during spring. Louisiana's governor said earlier this week the state was seeing a "huge spike" in infections and hospitalizations. And in Arizona, officials reported Tuesday record-high Covid-19 hospitalization and ICU numbers.</p>

Hundreds of thousands of infections are added to the country's tally every single day, with the US adding more than three million new reported infections since the start of the month.

In Los Angeles County, about one in three residents has been infected with the virus since the pandemic's start, [according to data](#) published by county officials. Outbreaks have increased across workplaces as well as schools and daycare settings, they said.

Echoing other leaders' warnings, the LA officials added they have "not yet fully seen the effect of transmission in the period from around Christmas to New Years."

And with all eyes now turned to the nation's capital ahead of Inauguration Day, cases in Washington DC have never been higher. Right now, it's averaging more than 320 new cases every day -- about a 38% jump from the previous week. DC has reported a total of more than [32,600 Covid-19 cases](#) since the pandemic's start, about 10% of which have been added in 2021.

### **States are expanding groups eligible for vaccination**

So far, more than 29.3 million Covid-19 vaccine doses have been distributed nationwide and more than 10.2 million Americans have received their first dose, according to [data](#) from the CDC.

And some experts have encouraged states to open vaccine eligibility to more groups, to help speed up vaccine administrations.

In New Jersey, residents 65 and older and residents aged 16 to 64 with certain chronic health conditions are now eligible to sign up to get vaccinated, officials announced Wednesday. California also expanded its eligibility guidelines to include residents 65 and older. A news release from the state's health department added that healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities remain California's top priority for vaccines.

"There is no higher priority than efficiently and equitably distributing these vaccines as quickly as possible to those who face the gravest consequences," Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement. "Individuals 65 and older are now the next group eligible to start receiving vaccines. To those not yet eligible for vaccines, your turn is coming."

The announcements follow similar ones made by state leaders including Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves, who earlier this week said residents 65 and older or those with pre-existing medical conditions can make appointments for Covid-19 vaccinations.

"My main priority is not to try and fight this pandemic with stricter and stricter orders," Reeves said. "It's to get better and better at distributing the vaccine, and that's what our focus is now."

### **Mass vaccination centers being opened**

And while expanding the list of who can get vaccinated, states are coming up with more options for where residents can get their shots.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is working on a plan to use [the Yankee Stadium as a vaccination site](#), the mayor announced Wednesday.

"That plan is in motion," he said, adding the city will release more details when the plan has been worked through.

De Blasio's announcement came about a day after he and New York Mets owner Steve Cohen said a 24-hour vaccine mega site will be set up at Citi Field in Queens later this month.

In Hawaii, officials said Wednesday they are opening two new Covid-19 mass vaccination sites, which they hope can in a few weeks be able to vaccinate between 3,000 and 4,000 people daily.

	<p>And in California, the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim is now Orange County's <a href="#">first "super" Covid-19 vaccination site</a>. Hundreds of cars had lined up for its opening on Wednesday, CNN affiliate KCAL/KCBS <a href="#">reported</a>.</p> <p>The site will be able to vaccinate upwards of 7,000 people each day, Andrew Do, acting chairman of the county's Board of Supervisors said in a news conference Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Feds: domestic extremists emboldened</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/politics/us-government-prepares-for-extremists/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/politics/us-government-prepares-for-extremists/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)Federal law enforcement officials are warning that domestic extremists are likely more emboldened to <a href="#">carry out attacks on President-elect Joe Biden's upcoming inauguration</a> and throughout 2021 after seeing the success of last week's siege on the US Capitol.</p> <p>The threat is further complicating <a href="#">an already monumental challenge facing law enforcement agencies</a> tasked with securing Washington in the coming days.</p> <p>CNN has learned that federal law enforcement agencies, in a series of bulletins and calls with local partners this week, have issued an urgent call for assistance in securing the nation's capital as the inauguration nears, and painted a dire picture of potential threats leading up to January 20.</p> <p>Officials are warning that last Wednesday's attack on the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump will likely motivate additional follow-on attacks by extremists throughout 2021, according to an intelligence bulletin dated Wednesday and obtained by CNN.</p> <p>Warning that the people who attacked the Capitol largely viewed their efforts as a success, the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Office of the Director of National Intelligence said the attack "very likely will serve as a significant driver of violence" for a diverse set of domestic extremists, according to the bulletin.</p> <p>The joint US government intelligence bulletin was first <a href="#">reported by The New York Times</a>.</p> <p>"The violent breach of the US Capitol Building is very likely part of an ongoing trend in which (extremists) exploit lawful protests, rallies, and demonstrations, and other gatherings to carry out ideologically-motivated violence and criminal activity," the intelligence bulletin warned.</p> <p>The range of potential future targets of attack was varied, with intelligence officials warning in the bulletin that extremists could zero-in on government officials and institutions, as well as racial and religious minorities, journalists and members of the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>The bulletin also indicated that the January 6 attack may have served as a venue for extremists of differing ideological motivations to foster connections.</p> <p>In addition to the perceived success of the January 6 Capitol attack, intelligence officials warned that the response by law enforcement could also motivate extremists to respond with violence, including at Biden's upcoming inauguration.</p> <p>"Since the (Capitol attack), violent online rhetoric regarding the (inauguration) has increased, with some calling for unspecified 'justice' " for a rioter shot by police inside the Capitol, the bulletin said.</p> <p>Other motivations for possible future attacks included anti-government views held by extremists, as well as grievances associated with the false narrative that the 2020 presidential election was stolen.</p>



"The increasing prevalence and influence of conspiracy theories based on a belief in the existence of global or 'deep state' actors who work to manipulate various social, political, and/or economic conditions of the United States very likely serves as a driver of some (extremist) violence," the report said.

The conspiracy theory-laden language observed by US intelligence officials has often mirrored baseless claims made by Trump. Throughout his presidency, Trump has claimed without evidence that a nefarious group of "deep state" actors have been secretly working to undermine his presidency, and he has continually spread disinformation about the integrity of the 2020 election.

### **Feds working with police around the country**

As law enforcement prepares to respond to upcoming protests before and during the inauguration, FBI Director Chris Wray and Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Ken Cuccinelli held a call Wednesday with law enforcement leaders from around the country to provide a briefing on the nationwide threat picture relating to planned protests, according to a person briefed on the call.

The source said the FBI briefed their law enforcement partners on intelligence reporting indicating protesters planned to conduct "peaceful, armed demonstrations" in Washington, DC, and at state capitols around the US on January 17 to protest the results of the 2020 election.

An FBI spokesperson confirmed the call, but did not provide additional details.

As [CNN previously reported](#), an internal FBI bulletin disseminated to law enforcement warned that "armed protests" were being planned at all 50 state capitols and the US Capitol in Washington in the days leading up to the inauguration.

The FBI indicated federal law enforcement is currently working to identify any suspected extremists who may pose a threat at the planned armed demonstrations.

On the call, FBI officials said they remain concerned about the prospect of extremists appearing at planned rallies and conducting violence, and that violent domestic extremists continue to pose the most significant threat to Biden's inauguration, according to another source familiar with the call.

"The chatter is off the charts right now," one official told CNN on Tuesday regarding extremists talking online about future actions.

Federal officials stressed on the call with state, local, tribal and college campus law enforcement leaders that the FBI will not tolerate extremists using the First Amendment as a guide to incite violence, adding that they expect threats will continue past Biden's inauguration, the source said.

In addition to the potential threats at government buildings, officials discussed seeing an increased number of threats to private companies and their executives in recent days.

According to the source, federal officials said on the call that Russian actors have been amplifying the false narrative that members of Antifa infiltrated Trump supporters during the riot at the US Capitol, and the Chinese have seized on news stories showing chaos in the US.

### **Secret Service report shows government is monitoring threats**

Another government report is shedding light on how law enforcement officials are monitoring the threat of potential violence in the coming days.

According to an internal US Secret Service report dated January 11 and obtained by CNN, analysts with the Secret Service's team responsible for monitoring websites and social media for planned demonstrations note that protesters unhappy with the 2020 election results are using online platforms to organize events in the Washington area and around the country.



In one online forum observed by investigators, the report indicated that a group calling itself "American Patriots Nationwide" is organizing a violent demonstration in Washington beginning on January 16. On its website, the group indicated it plans to use its members to surround the Capitol, White House and Supreme Court, and only allow the entry of people designated by Trump.

The Secret Service report said the American Patriots Nationwide group also planned to detain Democratic politicians who "played a role in planning or executing or supporting the attempted coup of the United States of America from 2016 to 2020."

The Secret Service bulletin did not offer an assessment on the realistic nature of the planned rallies nor how much confidence investigators have in the ability of organizers to achieve their stated objectives.

According to the report, groups associated with the Boogaloo movement planned to host an armed march from the Washington Monument to the White House, and encouraged its members to bring weapons. Other separate events noted in the Secret Service report similarly encouraged protest attendees to come armed, although organizers did not explicitly encourage violence.

The District of Columbia has some of the strictest gun laws in the country and the open carrying of firearms is prohibited.

For Inauguration Day, the Secret Service report indicated that analysts identified more than 35 rallies being planned online around Washington.

One event dubbed the Million Militia March encouraged attendees to bring weapons. "The group claims they will not attack, but will defend," the Secret Service report noted.

As part of its protective mission, the Secret Service routinely reviews so-called "open source intelligence" to review planned rallies and protests staged near official events. The Secret Service report obtained by CNN indicated that recent efforts by social media companies to suspend users engaged in election-related disinformation has, in effect, hindered the ability of analysts to identify some details of planned inauguration protests.

Not all of the planned demonstrations listed in the Secret Service report were pro-Trump.

According to analysts, one group is planning a rally called "Smoking to Trump's Sorrow," in which attendees will join to together to smoke marijuana and celebrate the end of Trump's presidency.

Another planned DC event, dubbed the "Lesbian U-Haul Trump Out Parade" is being organized to help move Trump out of the White House, although the Secret Service did not indicate what logistics the group planned to employ to accomplish its stated goal.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 FAA cracks down on unruly passengers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/nofly-list-capitol-riot/2021/01/13/9ffbaf58-55c4-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/nofly-list-capitol-riot/2021/01/13/9ffbaf58-55c4-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>Federal officials say they are taking aggressive aim at security concerns that have surfaced in the wake of violence at the U.S. Capitol last week, including cracking down on unruly airplane passengers and potentially placing those who participated in the riot on the no-fly list.</p> <p>Federal Aviation Administration chief Steve Dickson signed an order Wednesday that creates an "enforcement program" targeted at passengers who "assault, threaten, intimidate, or interfere" with crew members while flying.</p>

“The FAA has recently observed a proliferation of such conduct, including conduct stemming from the failure to wear masks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic-related health measures in place on board aircraft or conduct following the January 6, 2021 violence at the U.S. Capitol,” the agency said. “This bulletin announces an FAA special emphasis enforcement program to more effectively address and deter such conduct by passengers.”

The order comes one day after Steven D’Antuono, head of the FBI’s Washington Field Office, said the agency was “actively looking at” placing the rioters on the federal no-fly list. It was the first time FBI officials acknowledged publicly they were considering that step.

In recent days, lawmakers have questioned whether enough is being done to prevent a repeat of the violence that shook the Capitol. Among the measures being considered is using the no-fly list to block people from returning to Washington in the days leading to the inauguration.

That issue probably will be raised by law enforcement officials during a Thursday briefing for members of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Committee Chairman Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) was among the first lawmakers to demand that rioters be placed on the no-fly list — a call echoed Tuesday by Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.).

“We cannot allow these same insurrectionists to get on a plane and cause more violence and more damage,” Schumer said.

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, also called for rioters to be banned from flying.

“First strike and you’re out,” she said. “This will help serve as a deterrent to unruly passengers who had been bucking the rules of aviation safety.”

Others, however, disagreed that the list should be expanded to include those involved in last week’s insurrection.

“The No Fly List has been used since its inception to unjustly target Black and Brown people, particularly Muslims, and is a due process nightmare,” Manar Waheed, senior legislative and advocacy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, which has sued the government over the list, said in a statement.

“Doubling down on it now will simply further entrench an error-prone and unconstitutional system that will continue to be used unfairly against people of color.”

Rather than expand the list, Waheed called on President-elect Joe Biden to review it and along with lawmakers, “work toward overhauling or ending this watch list once and for all.”

The no-fly list is one of several tools law enforcement officials have at their disposal as they seek to prevent a repeat of last week’s violence.

The Transportation Security Administration uses the list to screen passengers considered a threat to commercial aviation or national security. The list is a subset of the Terrorist Screening Database, designed to “identify individuals who are known or suspected terrorists,” the TSA said in a statement. Those on the no-fly list will not be issued boarding passes.

Airlines also maintain their own no-fly lists, which during the pandemic have grown to include more than 1,600 people who have refused to wear masks when flying.

In a letter this week to TSA Administrator David Pekoske, Thompson and Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.), expressed concern that law enforcement officials were not being aggressive enough in light of indications

	<p>that many of the same groups that participated in last week's attack on the Capitol were threatening to return to Washington.</p> <p>"Despite this imminent threat, it appears little is being done to disrupt the travel of terrorists who just attacked the seat of the U.S. Government and wish to do so again," the lawmakers wrote.</p> <p>The lawmakers' concerns came despite assurances by the TSA that the agency remains on "high alert" and that there would be a stepped-up law enforcement presence at all three major Washington-area airports through the inauguration. The agency added that members of the Federal Air Marshal Service also would continue to travel on flights to ensure the security of passengers and crew members.</p> <p>Airlines, too, say they are adding staffing at airports in the region, with some saying they will arrange for crew members to stay outside the city.</p> <p>Officials across the Washington area are discouraging people from visiting for the inauguration.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Report: IRS hampered, overwhelmed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/irs-refunds-stimulus-delayed/2021/01/13/0eb392da-5507-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/irs-refunds-stimulus-delayed/2021/01/13/0eb392da-5507-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">coronavirus</a> pandemic has magnified critical weaknesses at the Internal Revenue Service as many taxpayers face economic hardship, with old technology and understaffing still delaying millions of tax returns and stimulus checks, a new report finds.</p> <p>The tax agency blasted out most of the more than 160 million stimulus payments Congress mandated starting last March and managed to process roughly that many tax returns to electronic filers last year — even as the virus sidelined much of its workforce, said the National Taxpayer Advocate's annual assessment, which was released Wednesday.</p> <p>But though the IRS "can effectively handle whatever it can automate," it does not automate a lot. And its heavy reliance on paper, outdated methods of communicating with taxpayers and information technology systems that date to the 1960s resulted in delayed refunds for paper filers and missing or inaccurate stimulus payments, auditors found.</p> <p>The overwhelmed agency, challenged now by a new tax season and another round of stimulus payments, failed to set up procedures to resolve many of these issues. As of late last year, 7.1 million individual and 2.3 million business returns remained unprocessed, the report said.</p> <p>Among the most acute customer service lapses in 2020: Employees answered just 1 in 4 of more than 100 million calls to the IRS's toll-free telephone lines, leaving the rest unanswered or directed to automated responses, the report found. And for months, taxpayers who wanted to consult agents in person could not, since offices that provide in-person assistance were closed.</p> <p>"While the IRS took some steps to keep the public informed about COVID-19-related delays, particularly later in the year, taxpayers often did not understand what was happening with their tax returns, refunds, balances, or [stimulus payments]," Taxpayer Advocate Erin M. Collins wrote in her first annual report to Congress.</p> <p>"For much of the year, relatively limited information was released, and comments made by IRS officials often were incomplete or misleading," Collins wrote. She predicted that the challenges created by the pandemic would continue through the 2021 filing season "and possibly for months longer."</p> <p>The Taxpayer Advocate Service is an independent organization within the IRS that advocates for taxpayers.</p>

Collins's 278-page report offers a detailed description of how one federal agency, already weakened by a decade of funding cuts by Congress, has navigated through a pandemic that continues to shut down and slow many of its functions. Paper tax returns and correspondence from taxpayers sat unopened in trailers in U.S. Postal Service parking lots for months while IRS offices were closed, an arresting image of an antiquated government function the virus had hobbled.

Though thousands of IRS employees have been able to work remotely since last spring, large parts of the agency's customer service workforce has not. That's because it had not switched phone operators and others employees to technology platforms that allow them to answer phones from home and send secure emails to taxpayers.

Agency spokeswoman Jodie Reynolds said in a statement that the IRS "remains committed to continue to do as much as it can, subject to budget constraints, to provide meaningful services to all taxpayers, whether in-person, on the phone or online."

She said that in the past year, the agency "simultaneously executed a highly successful filing season while taking on significant new responsibilities to deliver hundreds of millions of [stimulus] payments." She acknowledged the weakness cited in the report and said the IRS sent a plan to Congress this week to "reimagine the taxpayer experience, enhance employee training and restructure the organization to increase collaboration and innovation."

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), the incoming chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said in a statement that the IRS needs "rebuilding" after a "decade of Republican budget cuts" so it can crack down on wealthy tax cheats. "I appreciate the Taxpayer Advocate's focus on the need to restore critical funding and staffing," he wrote.

On Tuesday, in guidelines to the public for the upcoming tax season, the agency said it anticipates "heavy call volume on its telephone assistance lines to continue into the filing season," and it urged taxpayers to file returns electronically, sign up for direct deposit and provide up-to-date banking information to receive their refunds.

About 16 million taxpayers file paper tax returns, and most receive refunds that in recent years have averaged \$3,000, the report says. But because the IRS could not fully staff its mail facilities, some taxpayers have waited six months or longer for refunds.

With overburdened phone lines and an online portal many customers had trouble navigating, they were left in the dark about their payments as the pandemic dragged on. When taxpayers did reach agents by phone, the agents had no access to their individual accounts.

In another manifestation of communication problems, the IRS generated more than 20 million notices of various kinds that it wasn't able to mail promptly. Rather than reprinting them later, the agency sent the initial printed notices with old dates to taxpayers — often with response deadlines that had passed. This caused significant concern for those who may have thought they missed critical deadlines, the report concluded.

Some of these issues stem from long-standing problems that include a roughly 20 percent inflation-adjusted cut to the IRS budget in the past decade. The workforce shrank by about the same fraction, leaving the agency with an estimated 26 percent of its employees eligible to retire this fiscal year.

The result is antiquated technology and inadequate staffing to meet the mission, the report said.

The IRS has estimated it needs \$2.3 billion to \$2.7 billion in additional funding over the next six years to upgrade to a modern computer system. But it ended 2020 with \$223 million in the account for such projects, "a drop in the bucket compared to the IRS's IT funding needs," auditors wrote.

	<p>The report predicts that some of these problems are likely to continue this year because of a cascading effect. Taxpayers have 2019 tax returns and refunds still outstanding. Paper returns will continue to be processed more slowly than usual because of covid-19 social distancing guidelines in processing centers.</p> <p>And with Congress just authorizing another round of stimulus payments — and possibly more after President-elect Joe Biden takes office — the challenges are likely to continue, the audit said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Restaurant, hotel workers reel amid layoffs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/01/13/restaurant-hospitality-unemployment/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/01/13/restaurant-hospitality-unemployment/</a>
GIST	<p>Jasmine Slater was making \$600 a week waitressing at a family steakhouse in Orlando — enough to pay her bills and support herself and two children — before the pandemic left her without a job.</p> <p>Since being laid off in March, the 34-year-old has depleted her savings trying to survive on \$130 a week in unemployment benefits. She received her \$600 stimulus check last week but spent nearly all of it catching up on electricity payments.</p> <p>“It’s been 10 months but I’m still shocked, disheartened, devastated,” Slater said. “I’ve gone through my savings, I’ve gone through my resources — all of that is depleted now. The bills are piling up and my kids are looking to me for answers I can’t provide.”</p> <p>The <a href="#">coronavirus</a> pandemic has ravaged the hospitality, travel and retail industries since its outset in March, when shutdowns and restrictions meant to contain the virus cost more than 520,000 U.S. service workers their jobs.</p> <p>This workforce is under renewed pressure amid a resurgence in coronavirus cases: 498,000 leisure and hospitality jobs disappeared last month, the Labor Department reported Friday. Restaurant and bar workers made up the bulk of those losses, roughly 3 in 4, an onslaught that disproportionately affected women and workers of color. Overall employment in the sector has fallen 23 percent during the pandemic, outpacing every other industry, federal data shows.</p> <p>With new rounds of state-mandated restaurant and bar restrictions, and winter weather limiting outdoor dining, food services accounted for 372,000 job losses in December. That backslide obliterated significant hiring gains in industries like professional services, retail and construction, and the United States recorded a net loss of 140,000 jobs in December — its first negative showing since April.</p> <p>“A lot of these places were only just holding on, and a lot of people were crossing their fingers and hoping for the best,” said Martha Gimbel, a labor economist and senior manager of economic research at Schmidt Futures. “But December was an important reminder that there are industries that will not be recovering until this public health crisis is over.”</p> <p>The \$900 billion pandemic relief package Congress approved in December restarts the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) of loans to small businesses, with employee retention incentives and loan forgiveness for small restaurants. Nonetheless, many industry experts say restaurants, bars, hotels and tourism businesses remain at risk of permanent closure.</p> <p>Some 110,000 restaurants and bars — more than 1 in 6 across the country — have gone under since March.</p> <p>Sen. Charles E. Schumer, the incoming majority leader, has pushed bipartisan legislation known as the Restaurants Act, which would provide \$120 billion to eateries nationwide. President-elect Joe Biden also has advocated for direct relief to restaurants.</p> <p>“We need to do much more for restaurants,” Schumer (D-N.Y.) <a href="#">told the Senate</a> in December.</p>

For a half-million restaurant and hospitality workers, aid may come too late. They have been unemployed, reemployed and unemployed again. They have cobbled together piecemeal work and toggled between serving only to-go customers, serving at 50 percent capacity, then at 25 percent capacity and then back to no indoor dining, with rules often varying from town to town.

“We’ve pivoted so many times we’ve made a circle,” said Eric Cook, chef-owner of Gris-Gris in New Orleans. “We’re like a million termites on a bridge holding hands.”

### **‘It’s been rough’**

Malcolm Garrett, a line cook at a casino steakhouse in New Orleans, lost his job the day before Thanksgiving.

Garrett, who had been furloughed early in the pandemic, went back to work at Harrah’s New Orleans Hotel & Casino in June. But with occupancy capped at 25 percent and locals still skittish about venturing out, business fell drastically. He fired up about 80 steaks on the busiest nights, down from 230 before the pandemic.

“It’s been rough,” said Garrett, who bought a house with his girlfriend in August. “Now, it’s been over a month and I’m still looking for a job.”

Garrett filed for unemployment benefits in November but is still waiting on money to arrive. In the meantime, he’s been interviewing for jobs but says it’s been hard because many chains are rapidly closing locations.

“I hope my unemployment comes through before I get really desperate,” he said. “This pandemic is really thinning out the amount of work I can find.”

Nearly 4 million leisure and hospitality jobs have been lost since February, a staggering blow to an industry that once had 15 million employees, economists said.

“Workers have already gone through this incredibly unstable 2020 experience — even if they kept their jobs or got their jobs back, they may have just lost them again,” said Gimbel, the economist. “It’s incredibly destabilizing.”

The hemorrhaging of service-sector jobs, she added, has also had ripple effects for unemployed workers from all sectors who might have otherwise taken jobs at restaurants, bars or entertainment venues to make ends meet. The number of leisure and hospitality job openings has also fallen markedly — down 17 percent in November from a year earlier — according to data released Tuesday by the Labor Department. “All of these industries are interconnected,” she said.

After a friend died of covid-19 early in the pandemic, Timothy Carl made himself a promise: He was going to live his best life. He left Rochester, N.Y., for Southern California and took a job as an assistant innkeeper and chef at the Palm Springs Rendezvous, an 11-room bed-and-breakfast known for its retro flair.

He made \$15 an hour and good tips cooking three-course breakfasts for a steady stream of guests before business dried up. He lost his job on Dec. 1, days before Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) issued a stay-at-home order that prohibited hotel bookings for tourism and other nonessential reasons. The property is now up for sale.

“I’ve gone through my savings and I am as broke as a joke,” said Carl, who is more than \$3,000 behind on rent. “The whole month of December felt like the darkest time of my life. I haven’t made money in a month and, to be honest, I don’t know when I will again.”

Beast was the kind of restaurant Portland, Ore., was famous for: culinarily ambitious but still casual and inviting. Bambi Stenberg, 44, served a six-course tasting menu four nights a week to diners along two communal tables.

When the pandemic hit, her James Beard award-winning boss, Naomi Pomeroy, was decisive, closing the restaurant a day before the governor mandated it in March. Stenberg got on unemployment right away, each check about half of what she would have made at the restaurant. It lasted until September, then partial unemployment after that ran out in December.

“At first, me and my team from Beast did Zoom calls, but those tapered off,” she said. “I thought I would have read a huge stack of books by now, but the level of stress prevalent for a year has prevented me from focusing.”

Having worked in high-end restaurants for the past 15 years, she worries what the dining landscape will look like when this is all over: “So many exciting restaurant groups have shuttered entirely.” Beast is permanently closed, with Pomeroy turning to a new retail takeout meal concept.

“Restaurants need a relief bill, some kind of influx of support to keep the lights on,” Stenberg said, “otherwise the Portland food scene will disappear.”

For cities such as Las Vegas, Orlando and New Orleans, tourism and hospitality are economic drivers that fuel the entire state.

“In New Orleans we only have food, music, culture. It’s what keeps this city alive, and what feeds the state,” said Cook of Gris-Gris. His restaurant closed for months, reopened for takeout, closed again and has operated as a private party space.

“This past year, we gave up our lives and we’re now right back where we were,” he says, pointing to robust holiday air travel and the unrestricted reopening of other kinds of businesses in recent months that led to an explosion in coronavirus infection numbers. New Orleans returned to “modified Phase 1” restrictions on Friday, with restaurants back to 25 percent capacity.

“It’s a sin tax; we’re being punished,” he said. “We haven’t done anything wrong and we’re still the target. It’s the biggest misdirection of blame I’ve ever seen in my life.”

### **‘Like a ghost town’**

In Tampa, Michelle Cooper breathed a sigh of relief when Walt Disney World called her back to work in the reservations department in late May, after more than two months on furlough. She worked from home through early October, then was laid off from the \$15-an-hour position.

Since then, the 51-year-old says, it’s been difficult to find remote work in a state that relies heavily on tourism. Cooper, whose asthma makes her more vulnerable to the coronavirus, says she worries about taking an office or retail job that would put her in close contact with others. For now, she has enough in savings to keep her family afloat but worries about what might happen in another month or two. Florida unemployment benefits max out at \$275 a week, which she says won’t cover her monthly rent.

“I’ve never made a ton of money anyway, but it’s definitely more difficult now,” said Cooper, whose 20-year-old son recently moved back in with her after losing his job at Busch Gardens. “We’re buying less food because we have to be careful about what we spend.”

After months of uncertainty, some service workers say they’re considering leaving the industry altogether. Michael Matsuse-Panzo, who was furloughed in April from his front-desk job at a hotel on Oahu, says he’s been contemplating moving to the East Coast or looking for a new line of work if tourism doesn’t return to the island soon.



“We’re so used to seeing the hustle and bustle of tourists, but now it’s like a ghost town,” the 31-year-old Hawaii native said. “You go to Waikiki [Beach] and there are no cars, no people. It’s almost frightening.”

Matsuse-Panzo’s unemployment benefits lapsed a few days after Christmas. He received his \$600 stimulus check soon after, which he used to buy groceries and pay down credit card bills.

“I’m going to ride it out the next few months and see what happens,” he said. “But a lot of places still have a hiring freeze. There’s no way to get your foot in the door. When you’ve worked in the hospitality industry for 10 years, it’s hard to move on to the unknown of something different.”

### **Nothing but dead ends**

For many Americans, restaurant and hospitality work offers first-job, entry-level employment for young adults, students and those still “figuring things out.” But for others, it’s a lifelong career path, says Matt Duggan, who in November lost his position as general manager for the high-end Lucques Group in Los Angeles. It’s a path that, after 31 years in the business, now feels like nothing but dead ends.

His restaurant group had three restaurants at the start of the pandemic, as well as the contract for food service at the Hollywood Bowl. In the spring, the company closed two of the restaurants, leaving one empty and selling the building of the other, and keeping A.O.C. as its last stand. Their workforce shriveled from 500 to a half-dozen, Duggan among them.

“We kept thinking, ‘Just a little bit more,’ but that light at the end of the tunnel hasn’t gotten any closer,” he said. The group put money into building outdoor dining space, then outdoor dining got shut down again. He lost his job just before Thanksgiving.

Extended unemployment benefits were set to expire at the end of the year. The most recent relief package extends the programs, but by less than three months. That’s not much time to find new work in the industry, especially if operating restrictions persist.

“Things are financially pretty grim for me right now,” Duggan said. “Is there any other job where I could take my restaurant skills? Do I take a chance and move to another state where I can do restaurant work? The overall impact and duration of the crisis means that even places that haven’t had as many restrictions are going out of business.”

Duggan is doing tai chi at the house, trying to reconnect with family and friends. This Christmas, he and his wife put up every holiday decoration they own. They haven’t taken them down. Every night, they light every light.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 How superintendents reopened schools</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://crosscut.com/news/2021/01/what-it-takes-reopen-washington-schools-pandemic">https://crosscut.com/news/2021/01/what-it-takes-reopen-washington-schools-pandemic</a>
GIST	<p>As school districts across the state scramble to transition their classrooms safely from the online world back to the real world, they may benefit from the advice of the dozens of Washington districts that welcomed students back into their halls this past fall.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee recently <a href="#">encouraged school districts</a> to work toward bringing elementary school students back to class this winter or spring as long as COVID-19 rates continue to decline. Currently, 116 districts across the state have already embarked into the uncharted territory of educating the state’s youth in person during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to <a href="#">school reopening data</a> from the state’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Those districts have more than 50% of their students learning through some kind of hybrid online and in-person method.</p>

District leaders said their relative success at in-person education during the pandemic stems from a mixture of luck, well-timed innovation, flexibility, determination and careful planning. Some also pointed to strong, consistent communication with their local public health officers as a critical element. But at the core of many superintendents' advice was to embrace their own learning curve about how to run a school district during a pandemic.

### **Choices for families**

This past fall, the Moses Lake School District, home to some 8,500 students in Central Washington, welcomed nearly a third of its elementary kids back to its campuses five days a week. Superintendent Joshua Meek acknowledged that the district had a leg up last March, when Inslee first shut down the state, since it had long worked technology into their school infrastructure.

"We were in a position both from a teaching and learning standpoint, but technology standpoint [too, so] we transitioned immediately to remote learning," Meek said of the district's transition to online learning last spring. "Every one of our students has a device."

In 2018, the district began what it calls its one-on-one program, equipping all students third grade and up with their own laptops. During the 2020 spring semester, the district had ample time to adjust its approach to online learning, with the intention of bringing students back in the fall.

Over the summer, the staff troubleshooted different approaches that would meet OSPI recommendations. They decided to offer three options: fully remote classes, a traditional all-week schedule and a partial week mixed with online classes. Nearly a third of all students across the district naturally fell into each option. Giving students and parents a choice was a winning strategy.

"Like many places, this community has all sorts of beliefs, from all kids should just be in school, and we should pretend the coronavirus isn't there or that kids aren't infected by it to the opposite, that we should be in a full lockdown as a country," Meek said. "Everybody loves to have their voice heard and have a choice, so hands down the parent choice option gave us a lot of opportunity."

While the Moses Lake School District has been successful in bringing students back, Meek said it still weighs on him whether it was the right choice to push in-person learning for the benefit of the students, given he's had to shut down some schools after an outbreak. But in the end he feels he made the right decision and urges districts not only to "believe that you can do it," but to keep in close communication with everyone, from the school nurses to the community.

### **Communication is key**

Multiple superintendents credited outreach to families as key to offering students a quality education in difficult times.

For the Ellensburg School District, about 70 miles west of Moses Lake, creativity and communication both seem to be tied to the district's success at combining online and in person learning. Ellensburg has a truly hybrid model, with students split into two schedule groups and each attending school in person on different days.

The district eased into school in the fall by first phasing in higher-need students beginning on Sept. 9 and bringing everyone else back in October.

During the planning and decision process, Ellensburg Superintendent Jinger Haberer held listening Zoom sessions that attracted as many as 200 participants. Hearing directly from the community helped Haberer decide to offer hybrid classes.

Communication with parents wasn't the only important way the district needed to build solid relationships. Haberer notes that having a strong partnership with her local public health officer, Dr. Mark Larson from the Kittitas County Public Health Department, has been tremendously helpful.

“I talk to him at least two or three times a week; If I send him an email saying, ‘Hey, I’d like to talk to you,’ we talk,” Haberer said, adding that she keeps track of all possible school outbreaks, touching base with Larson and being transparent about it with parents. So far, only two coronavirus cases have been traced back to a school campus.

At Ellensburg schools and many of the other hybrid districts, wearing masks, hand-washing, temperature checks and prior digital acknowledgment that a student or family member has not shown COVID-19 symptoms before attending class have helped reduce any on-site infections, Haberer believes.

“You hear a lot in the media about ‘the lost year,’ — that’s not going to happen,” Haberer said. “We are determined and have hope and confidence in our people that we will succeed in providing support and seeing our students thrive.”

### **Student cooperation**

Students also play a major role in keeping schools COVID-safe by following guidelines set by schools and local health departments. When Selah School District students returned to school in the district, about 40 miles south of Ellensburg, in October, Superintendent Shane Backlund felt proud of their resilience and ability to follow protocols.

“I would say my colleagues that have had kids in session for some time would agree with me: The kids have fallen right into a routine,” Backlund said. “Kids have just adapted really well, and they really love to be at school. We’ve found that once something has been taken away from you like that, kids, especially K-8, are exceptionally happy to be back.”

As districts have adapted and adjusted to the pandemic, as with anything, they’ve sometimes run into growing pains and have had to problem-solve. Backlund is blunt about the answer: “We just have to be flexible.”

Backlund said success is a result of a multilayered ... “swiss cheese” plan, from communication, to working with families and students, to having everyone wear masks and wash their hands and staying home if they feel sick.

“There’s probably improper mask wearing, there’s probably not the best hand-washing every time, some kids are probably not going to socially distance as well as others, you might miss a kid by attestation screening. But when you layer all those together, you’re able to really provide a safe environment,” he said.

### **Flexibility or improvisation**

Sometimes flexibility just looks like improvising. Right before school started in the East Valley School District southeast of Yakima, Superintendent Kelly Shea recalls how multiple bus drivers had to quarantine because of a coronavirus exposure. That left the district with too few drivers to pick up students based on the newly adjusted bus route schedule. On top of that challenge, all buses were limited by the virus to carrying 20 students rather than the usual 60.

“We had to scramble very quickly to either find enough drivers or run buses twice,” he said. They decided to have drivers run their buses out, pick up some kids and drop them off at school and then turn right around and do it again.

The Kennewick School District, which educates more than 19,000 students about 80 miles southeast of Yakima, clocks in as one of the largest school districts holding in-person classes this year. Superintendent Traci Pierce estimated that nearly half of all the students, mostly kindergarten through fifth grade, are on campus part-time. In February, the district plans to phase in middle and high school students for hybrid learning. Currently, the school offers hybrid and remote learning, as well as an all-online academy.

None of it has been easy, especially the fast timeline for implementation, Pierce acknowledged.

"It's certainly not perfect. I think there's no replacement for in-person learning for students, but our staff has done a really good job of making the shift and trying to do the best that we can for our students," she said.

The Kennewick School District follows a split-schedule model similar to the Ellensburg School District, bringing in two groups of students onto campus on different days. Pierce said the district has also collaborated closely with neighboring districts, Pasco and Richland. On top of doing internal safety investigations, the districts have all worked with external safety experts to provide families with an extra layer of assurance.

That assurance has possibly encouraged some parents to let their kids return to campus. Pierce said students and families have the option to transition from remote learning to hybrid learning. Similarly, the Moses Lake School District is also allowing parents to send their students back to campus after starting the year remote.

For other superintendents on the same path, Pierce said she thinks districts should feel confident about bringing students back to class, so long as they follow all the state and OSPI guidelines.

"I'm involved in networking calls with all of our superintendents in this region.... I don't think there's anything I'm saying that isn't already being considered and done by every district across the state," she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 DOH: 281,202 cases, 3838 deaths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article248484875.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article248484875.html</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">Washington state Department of Health</a> reported 2,892 new cases of COVID-19 Wednesday and 49 deaths.</p> <p>Pierce County <a href="#">reported 423 cases Wednesday and nine new deaths</a>. Pierce County has a total of 348 deaths likely caused by COVID-19 as of Wednesday, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.</p> <p>Statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 281,202 <a href="#">cases and 3,838 deaths</a>. Those numbers are up from 278,310 cases and 3,789 deaths Tuesday. The case total includes 12,001 cases listed as probable. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p> <p>Washington's population <a href="#">is estimated at about 7.6 million</a>, according to U.S. Census figures from July 2019.</p> <p><b>HOSPITALIZATIONS</b></p> <p>As of Dec. 25, the date with the most recent complete data, 99 people with confirmed cases of COVID-19 were admitted to Washington state hospitals.</p> <p>Preliminary reports indicate average daily hospital admissions were 102 in early January.</p> <p>Out of the state's <a href="#">total staffed intensive care unit beds</a> (1,188), approximately 80.7% (959) were occupied by patients Wednesday. Of those staffed ICU beds, 18.1% (215) held suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients.</p> <p><b>CASE RATES</b></p> <p>For the past seven days, Washington had a case rate of 37.1 per 100,000 people. Seven states were lower.</p>

The national rate for the same period was 74.8 per 100,000, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Arizona has the highest rate in the United States at 134.7. Hawaii is the lowest at 13.4.

### **VACCINE**

According to the CDC, 208,238 people in Washington (2.7% of the population) have been [vaccinated with a first dose](#) and 572,600 doses have been delivered to the state as of Wednesday. Currently approved vaccines require two shots for maximum effectiveness.

Currently, Washington state is in [phase 1A of vaccinations](#). That phase includes high-risk health care workers, high-risk first responders and residents and staff of congregate living settings such as nursing homes.

On the national level, 29.3 million doses have been distributed and 10.2 million people have received the first shot of the approved vaccines. The population of the United States is approximately 328 million.

### **TESTING**

On Jan. 2, the most recent date with confirmed testing data, 10,713 specimens were collected statewide, with 22.4% testing positive.

The average positive test rate for the seven days prior was 17.1%. More than 4.1 million tests have been conducted in Washington. The test numbers reflect only polymerase chain reaction tests, which are administered while the virus is presumably still active in the body.

### **COUNTY NUMBERS**

King County continues to have the highest numbers in Washington, with 71,106 cases and 1,135 deaths. Pierce County is second in cases, with 30,008. Snohomish County has the second-highest number of deaths at 437.

All counties in Washington have cases. Only three counties have case counts of fewer than 100.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 National Guard security Capitol campus</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/article248483905.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/article248483905.html</a>
GIST	<p>Increased security, including National Guard personnel, will remain on the state Capitol Campus through at least Inauguration Day for President-elect Joe Biden on Jan. 20.</p> <p>The Washington National Guard has been shoring up security at the campus alongside State Patrol troopers and local law enforcement since the start of the legislative session on Monday.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee activated the National Guard after dozens of President Trump supporters broke through the gate to the Governor's Mansion on Capitol Campus on Jan. 6, and in the shadow of the violent mob that stormed the nation's Capitol in Washington D.C.</p> <p>Though the first day of legislative session came and went with few incidents, the Nation Guard will remain due to "evolving intelligence" on security threats, according to a news release.</p>

	<p>The increased security measures may even extend past the inauguration as the situation develops, the release read.</p> <p>There continues to be a restricted area in the western part of the Capitol Campus, south of 12th Avenue, west of Cherry Lane, north of 15th Avenue and east of Capitol Lake.</p> <p>Many trails and roads on the campus also remain closed in the interest of public safety, according to the release. Any visitors can expect to see guards along fencing and barricades, however there is still space for people to assemble in non-restricted areas, the release read.</p> <p>All buildings on the Capitol Campus, including the Legislative building, also remain closed as they have been since March due to COVID-19-related restrictions.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Puget Sound region suffers power outages</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/local/weather/article/puget-sound-power-outages-january-wind-storm-15867240.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/local/weather/article/puget-sound-power-outages-january-wind-storm-15867240.php</a>
GIST	<p>More than 300,000 Puget Sound residents were still without power Wednesday afternoon after a windstorm shook the region overnight.</p> <p>Wind gusts reached speeds of 50-70 mph for much of the Puget Sound region, toppling trees and powerlines. Utility crews said they are assessing the damage and working to restore power to as many regions as possible. Residents across the region can check their estimated restoration time here.</p> <p>As of 2 p.m. Wednesday afternoon, Seattle City Light was reporting over 11,000 outages in the city and Puget Sound Energy reported 180,000 outages. Snohomish County reported approximately 65,000 outages.</p> <p>Some in Seattle are not estimated to have power restored until close to 8 p.m. this evening according to Seattle City Light's outage map. Earlier in the morning, over 560,000 Puget Sound residents reported power outages.</p> <p>The National Weather Service is currently predicting that the region will get another half inch to two inches of rain by late Thursday night, soaking the region even more for the wettest start to a year on record.</p> <p>Puget Sound Energy is reminding residents not to touch downed powerlines.</p> <p>In response to the outages, some schools in the area have canceled classes — both in person and online — for the day as many are without internet. The outages are also disrupting many work days as people telecommute due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>"We understand how difficult it is to be without power - especially with so many of our customers working from home and/or navigating remote learning," wrote Puget Sound Energy. "Our crews will work as quickly as they can to safely assess damage &amp; make repairs to equipment."</p> <p>Flooding is expected to continue at local rivers through Wednesday.</p> <p>The high winds have also closed several roadways, including state Route 20 Deception Pass Bridge after a truck tipped on the bridge. The bridge has since reopened according the the Washington State Department of Transportation.</p> <p>But those who were up early on Wednesday were treated to a colorful sunrise — a moment of calm after the storm.</p>

HEADLINE	01/13 Wash. readies quick move in rollout
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/coronavirus/article/washington-second-phase-coronavirus-vaccine-15868257.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/coronavirus/article/washington-second-phase-coronavirus-vaccine-15868257.php</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Washington</a> is preparing to move more quickly to the next phase of its <a href="#">coronavirus</a> vaccine prioritization as cases of the virus begin to tick up once again.</p> <p>The rise in cases raises concerns as public health officials continue to urge people to do everything they can to slow the spread of the virus while vaccine distribution moves forward at a slower pace.</p> <p>"We remain at a critical point with respect to COVID-19 response ... not just in the state of Washington, but throughout the country," Secretary of Health Uhair Shah said during a news briefing Wednesday. "The fight against this virus means that we have a fight against the clock to get shots out, vaccines out to as many people as possible."</p> <p>Since last month, Washington has been distributing vaccines to people in Phase 1A, which includes workers in health care and residents and staff in long-term care facilities. As it looks to speed up its timeline and move to Phase 1B — which includes older adults and older high-risk critical workers — in a matter of days, public health officials have also been fielding concerns about the pace of the state's rollout. The speed of the rollout will continue to depend on the state's vaccine supply.</p> <p>As of the end of the day on Jan. 11, a total of 201,660 doses of the vaccine had been given during Phase 1A and reported to the state. That number include first and second doses.</p> <p>"The promise of a vaccine is what gives all of us glimmers of hope ... Like many other states, the start of our vaccine rollout in the state of Washington has been uneven at best," Shah said. "And yes, we have heard concerns from partners, from the public, from a number of different entities about the pace that we as a state are moving at."</p> <p>Shah said there have been many challenges to the state's vaccine rollout and some of them have been out of the state's control. But officials have a "fundamental responsibility" to overcome those challenges and get vaccines out quickly to as many people as possible, Shah said.</p> <p>"While we are making progress every single day ... I recognize that it has not been enough," he said. "Over the last several days I have directed changes at the Department of Health level, at our agency, as we work with our partners to make sure we are able to deliver on the promise of vaccines and to do so quickly."</p> <p>One of those changes is the accelerated timeline to move into Phase 1B, Shah said.</p> <p>Michele Roberts, who leads the COVID-19 vaccine planning and distribution team, said the state is committed to listening and adjusting its approach throughout the process. She said she knows there has been frustration with some parts of the plan, but an undertaking this big comes with a "learning curve."</p> <p>"We hear your concerns and your need for a faster deployment," Roberts said. "We are committed to getting the vaccine to the people of Washington as fast as we can."</p> <p>The vaccine is the key tool that will ultimately allow people to resume much of their normal lives, Roberts said, but that will take time.</p> <p>"There's a lot to do before we get there," she said. "We need to make sure people at the highest risk of getting sick or dying get vaccinated first, and the rest of us will follow suit when it's our turn. That's what prioritization is all about. We are committed here in Washington to doing it right."</p>



Seattle and King County in recent days announced plans to launch mobile vaccination teams and open up mass vaccination sites to help get the vaccine out more quickly. But those efforts will also be dependent on the supply of the vaccine the state receives.

As vaccine distribution continues, public health officials are telling people to follow restrictions and continue wearing masks, social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, especially indoors.

As of Jan. 2, the most recent date the Department of Health has complete data for, the state was seeing a seven-day average of 2,352 new cases per day. That was up from days earlier on Dec. 25, when the state was reporting a seven-day average of about 1,750 new cases.

"Many of our counties are showing this sharp increase. We don't know how far this is going to go," said Scott Lindquist, state epidemiologist for communicable diseases. "The concern very clearly is we're having spikes in cases in many of our counties across the state."

Hospitalizations remain flat or decreasing, he said, but hospitalizations usually lag behind a rise in cases.

"We're in a very tenuous position," he said.

Last week, Gov. Jay Inslee announced a new plan to reopen the state by regions while still slowing the spread of the virus and avoiding putting a further strain on the state's hospitals. The plan, called "Healthy Washington," requires each of the eight regions across the state to meet four key metrics to advance to Phase 2. As of last week, no region was meeting all four metrics. On Monday, every region started in Phase 1.

Regions have to see a 10% decrease in the number of new coronavirus cases per 100,000 people over the previous 14 days and a 10% decrease in COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks. They also have to have an ICU occupancy below 90%, including both COVID-19 and other patients, and a test positivity rate below 10%.

In Phase 1, regions need to follow many of the same restrictions that have been in place statewide since before Thanksgiving. Indoor dining is banned, along with indoor gatherings with people outside one's household. Retail and grocery stores still have to cap occupancy at 25%.

Even when regions do move to Phase 2, they could get moved back to the first phase if they are not continuing to meet those metrics.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 EU warns: UK variant 'significant impact'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/coronavirus-variant-from-uk-must-not-get-out-of-hand-warns-eu">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/coronavirus-variant-from-uk-must-not-get-out-of-hand-warns-eu</a>
GIST	<p>The EU has warned that the highly contagious coronavirus variant first found in Britain is now having "a significant impact" in other European countries, and said its spread "must be stopped at all costs".</p> <p>"We cannot be complacent," Stella Kyriakides, the bloc's health commissioner, said on Wednesday. "We cannot let it get out of hand. So we are ready to help member states in the area of genomic sequencing of samples. There is no way around this."</p> <p>Concerns were also shared during the virtual meeting of EU health ministers of a "significant under-reporting" of the new variant by member states, with the commission urging health ministries to make detection of the mutation a priority.</p>

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, cited the UK-detected variant as he stressed the need for people to further reduce their contact with others, saying the country would not be able to lift all measures aimed at curbing the pandemic by the end of the month.

"One thing is already evident – it will not be possible to loosen all restrictions on 1 February," Spahn said, adding that it would take another two or three months for the effects of the vaccination campaign to kick in.

Berlin was set to approve stricter controls on people entering the country after the chancellor, Angela Merkel, on Tuesday reportedly told a working group of her Christian Democratic Union that the lockdown could last until early April.

In Denmark, the prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said an extension of existing lockdown measures, due to end on 17 January, was "clearly necessary ... not least to ensure that the British mutation does not spread".

The Danish parliament is halting some of its activities, including debates on several new bills, for a month. Last week it announced it would only allow flights into the country on which every passenger had tested negative for Covid-19.

In Spain the regions of Galicia, La Rioja and Cantabria have become the country's latest to tighten restrictions amid a spiralling national infection rate that officials have blamed on lax adherence to the rules over Christmas.

The country recorded a record 38,869 new Covid cases over the previous 24 hours, the government said on Wednesday night, marking the highest single-day spike in infections since the pandemic began.

Spain's health minister, Salvador Illa, described the rise as "very worrying" and warned that the pressure on hospitals and their ICUs was building. "I ask people to scrupulously respect the measures adopted by each autonomous region," he said. "It's the only way we have of controlling the virus."

Unlike other EU countries that have extended, or are preparing to extend, nationwide lockdowns, Spanish authorities have repeatedly rejected a new national confinement, instead delegating regional authorities for the imposition of curfews, limits on gatherings and restrictions on business opening hours.

Galicia on Wednesday banned all nonessential travel in the seven largest cities, ordered bars and restaurants to close at 4pm, and brought forward a curfew to 10pm, while La Rioja closed non-essential businesses at 5pm and limited group meetings to four people. Shops in Cantabria were banned from opening at weekends.

Meanwhile, a judge in Santiago de Compostela, in the north-west, ruled that a woman in a care home in the city should be vaccinated despite her daughter's opposition.

The judge accepted the woman had "very limited" cognitive capacity to decide for herself but said that, despite the daughter's fears of possible secondary effects, vaccination would incur less risk for the 84-year-old than holding back.

"While the act of vaccination itself carries a risk," said the judge, "so does not getting vaccinated." He referred in his ruling to WHO advice, saying the longer vaccination was delayed and the more the number of cases grew "the higher the risk".

The top scientific adviser to the French government, Jean-François Delfraissy, said there was no need to close schools in France yet but new restrictive measures had to be taken to slow further coronavirus infections, in particular the spread of the new variant.

	<p>“We think English data on the variant is not definitive enough to lead us to recommend the closing of schools in France,” Delfraissy said, adding that the challenge with the variant, which now accounts for about 1% of new Covid-19 infections in France, was “not to eliminate it but to slow its progression”.</p> <p>Italy’s health minister warned against “unforgivable” distractions as the ruling coalition looked close to collapse. The minister, Roberto Speranza, urged colleagues to stay focused on the health crisis, which has killed almost 80,000 people in Italy.</p> <p>“Let’s keep political infighting, real or presumed electoral tensions, far and separate from the health of Italians,” Speranza told parliament. “It would really be an unforgivable mistake to get distracted or to slow down near the finish line.”</p> <p>The government, led by Giuseppe Conte, the prime minister, is on the verge of imploding following weeks of internal criticism from the former premier Matteo Renzi, leader of the Italia Viva party.</p> <p>In Russia, the president, Vladimir Putin, ordered officials to begin mass vaccinations from next week, touting Russia’s homemade shot, Sputnik V, which was registered before the start of large-scale clinical trials, as the world’s best.</p> <p>“I ask you to begin the mass vaccination of the entire population next week,” Putin told officials at a televised government meeting. “The Russian vaccine is the best in the world.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Capitol attack: glimpse violence to come?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/capitol-attack-violence-far-right-trump">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/capitol-attack-violence-far-right-trump</a>
GIST	<p>A guillotine outside the state capitol in Arizona. A Democratic governor burned in effigy in Oregon. Lawmakers evacuated as pro-Trump crowds gathered at state capitols in Georgia and New Mexico. Cheers in Idaho as a crowd was told fellow citizens were “taking the Capitol” and “taking out” <a href="#">Mike Pence</a>, the vice-president.</p> <p>As a mob of thousands invaded the US Capitol on 6 January, Trump supporters threatened lawmakers and fellow citizens in cities across the country. Compared with the violent mob in Washington, the pro-Trump crowds elsewhere in the country were much smaller, attracting dozens to hundreds of people. But they used the same extreme rhetoric, labeling both Democratic politicians and Republicans perceived as disloyal to Trump as “traitors”.</p> <p>As the FBI warns of plans for <a href="#">new armed protests</a> in Washington and all 50 state capitols in the days leading up to Biden’s inauguration, and fresh calls for extreme violence circulate on <a href="#">social media forums</a>, the intensity of the nationwide pro-Trump demonstrations and attacks last week offer evidence of what might be coming next.</p> <p>Some of the pro-Trump demonstrations on Wednesday did not turn violent. The dozens of Trump supporters who entered the Kansas state capitol remained peaceful, according to <a href="#">multiple news reports</a>. In Carson City, Nevada, hundreds of Trump supporters <a href="#">drank beer and listened to rock music</a> while denouncing the election results, the Reno Gazette Journal reported.</p> <p>But in Los Angeles, white Trump supporters assaulted and <a href="#">ripped the wig off</a> the head of a young black woman who happened to pass their 6 January protest, the <a href="#">Los Angeles Times reported</a>. A white woman was <a href="#">captured on video</a> holding the wig and shouting, “Fuck BLM!” and, “I did the first scalping of the new civil war.”</p> <p>In <a href="#">Ohio</a> and <a href="#">Oregon</a>, fights broke out between counter-protesters and members of the Proud Boys, the neo-fascist group Trump directed in September to “<a href="#">stand back and stand by</a>”. Proud Boys also reportedly demonstrated in <a href="#">Utah</a>, <a href="#">California</a>, <a href="#">Florida</a> and <a href="#">South Carolina</a>.</p>

And in Washington state, Trump supporters, some armed, [pushed through the gate](#) of the governor's mansion and [stormed on to the lawn](#) of Democrat Jay Inslee's house. In Georgia, where lawmakers were [evacuated](#) from the state capitol, members of the [III% Security Force militia](#), a group known for its anti-Muslim activism, had gathered outside.

Militia members, neo-Nazis, and other rightwing extremists have discussed multiple potential dates for armed protests in the coming days, researchers who monitor extremist groups say, with proposals ranging from rallies or attacks on state capitols to a "million militia march" in Washington.

The FBI's [intelligence bulletin](#) has warned of potential armed protests from 16 January "at least" through inauguration day on 20 January, but researchers say that energy had not yet coalesced around a single event. Public social media forums where Trump supporters have gathered to discuss plans are full of dramatic, contradictory rumors, but experts say that more concrete plans are likely being made in private and in smaller forums that are more difficult to infiltrate.

The United States has no shortage of heavily armed extremists who have been openly calling for a new civil war, from members of the [Boogaloo Bois](#) – a nascent domestic terrorism group that has been linked to the murders of two law enforcement officers – to militia leaders such as [Stewart Rhodes](#), the Yale-educated founder of an anti-government group that recruits police and military officers, who was [photographed](#) outside the Capitol during the mob invasion last week.

Accusations at public protests that Democratic politicians are dictators, tyrants and "traitors" and suggestions that white Americans need to seize power back from their elected officials, have been intensifying for more than a year, fueled in part by furious demonstrations against public health measures that forced businesses to close to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which has disproportionately killed Black and Latino residents.

Before they stormed the US Capitol last week, angry crowds of white Americans, some armed with rifles, had staged chaotic demonstrations at state capitols in [Michigan](#), Idaho, California and elsewhere, often calling law enforcement officers "traitors" when they would not let them pass.

On 6 January, the news that Trump supporters were forcing their way into the Capitol was greeted with cheers at pro-Trump protests in other states. "Patriots have stormed the Capitol," a protest organizer in Arizona announced, prompting chants of "USA!" according to the [Arizona Republic](#).

"Supposedly, they're taking the Capitol and taking out Pence," the organizer of an Idaho protest told a crowd of about 300 people, according to the [Spokesman-Review](#). The crowd cheered.

In Washington DC, part of the mob at the Capitol had been captured on video shouting "[Hang Mike Pence!](#)" after the vice-president refused to give in to Trump's repeated demands to deny the results of the election and name him the winner.

Signs and rhetoric linked to the QAnon conspiracy theory, which holds that Trump is fighting a secret war against a powerful network of elite pedophiles, were present at multiple state events last week.

In Salem, Oregon, where an effigy of the Democratic governor, Kate Brown, was tarred and feathered before being burned, the protest outside the statehouse turned violent, as [Proud Boys clashed with counter-protesters](#). In Colorado, an estimated 700 people gathered at the state capitol to protest, many of them [not wearing masks](#), and Denver's mayor [announced](#) he was closing municipal buildings early as a precaution.

In Arizona, where 1,000 Trump supporters gathered to protest against the certification of Biden's victory, the guillotine outside the state capitol had a Trump flag on it, and the Trump supporters who had brought it gave an Arizona Republic reporter [a written statement](#), which included a list of baseless allegations of election fraud, and demands for new fraud audits and investigations.

	<p>“Why do we have a guillotine with us? The answer is simple,” the statement read. “For six weeks Americans have written emails, gathered peacefully, made phone calls and begged their elected officials to listen to their concerns. We have been ignored, ridiculed, scorned, dismissed, lied to, laughed at and essentially told, no one cares.</p> <p>“We pray for peace,” the statement concluded, “but we do not fear war.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Extra shots quandary for vaccination sites</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/extra-covid-19-shots-pose-quandary-for-vaccination-sites-11610569457?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/extra-covid-19-shots-pose-quandary-for-vaccination-sites-11610569457?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>
GIST	<p>David MacMillan lucked into a dose of Moderna Inc.’s Covid vaccine late on New Year’s Day. While grocery shopping at Giant Food in Washington, D.C., the 31-year-old paralegal passed by the in-store pharmacist who was scrambling to find takers for two doses after a pair of health-care workers missed their appointments. The store was scheduled to close in 10 minutes and the thawed doses would have to be thrown out.</p> <p>Two of the store’s associates and another customer had already declined the shots. Mr. MacMillan and his 25-year-old friend happily volunteered. “I was thrilled,” said Mr. MacMillan, whose post on TikTok about the experience went viral. “It’s like being told you won the lottery.”</p> <p>As scarce supplies slowly roll out to the public, there is sometimes extra vaccine. Vials have a bonus dose or two if vaccine kits have more-efficient syringes. Some people miss appointments and their shots have to be given away so vaccine doesn’t go to waste. Some vaccination sites are ready to give shots to new groups of people or want to move vaccine across county or state lines to where people are waiting for it, only to be held up by local authorities. Occasionally a freezer breaks prompting a race to get shots into arms.</p> <p>It’s an extra layer of complexity for vaccination sites as they struggle with the logistics of the largest vaccination campaign in history. The vaccine from Pfizer Inc. is stored below minus 76 degrees Fahrenheit and the Moderna vaccine below 5 degrees Fahrenheit. Once thawed neither can be put back in a freezer.</p> <p>The U.S. Health and Human Services Department said Tuesday that all people over 65 and anyone with pre-existing conditions should be eligible for the shot, releasing millions of doses that it has held back for second doses for health-care workers. The expanded eligibility will help vaccination sites find willing takers. At the same time some locations may not be able to administer shots as quickly as they would like due to staffing issues amid a winter surge in Covid-19 cases. And some may still face the problem of waste at the end of each day.</p> <p>When hospitals, pharmacies and other facilities received their first shipments of Pfizer’s vaccine a month ago, many quickly noticed that vials expected to have five doses each, sometimes had six or even seven. After some facilities threw out extra doses, the Food and Drug Administration said last month on Twitter that sites should use them. A week later, Moderna’s 10-dose vials began shipping, sometimes with enough vaccine for 11 shots. Health-care workers have been instructed not to let those extra doses go to waste.</p> <p>The unexpected blessing was a logistics headache, said Amy Compton-Phillips, chief clinical officer at multistate hospital system Providence. The Pfizer injection kits sent to hospitals had only five syringes and five needles. “So for the sixth or seventh dose, there’s no syringe or needle,” Dr. Compton-Phillips said. Those essentials are in short supply, she said, “so we are turning over rocks trying to give people those doses.”</p>

A spokesman for McKesson Corp. , which puts together vaccine kits for the government, said that some shipments of Pfizer vaccine included high-efficiency syringes, enabling extraction of additional doses from vials. The government procured the syringes for the kits, he said, and some aren't the more efficient type. He said McKesson is working with the U.S. government "to create kits which support extraction of the additional doses."

An HHS spokesman said the government is working to augment vaccine kits with a variety of syringes and needles, including more-efficient ones so an extra dose can be extracted from each Pfizer vial. Neither McKesson nor HHS commented on extra doses found in Moderna vaccine vials.

A spokesman for Giant Food said in a statement that the District of Columbia's public health department has directed the grocery chain to find willing takers for doses set to expire. Its pharmacists prioritize store associates for extra vaccine, then people over 65, before offering it to anyone over 18, he said.

Mount Sinai Health System in New York City keeps a list of its health-care workers approved to get the vaccine so it can summon them for a shot if there is extra that might be thrown out, said Susan Mashni, its chief pharmacy officer.

Providence could vaccinate faster if local regulations were more consistent and more flexible, said Ali Santore, the executive in charge of government affairs for the hospital system. In Washington state, it has largely completed vaccinating the first tier of eligible people and has vaccine to give to people in the next tier, she said, yet the state won't permit that additional distribution until Jan. 18.

In Southern California, she said Orange County now allows all those over 65 to be vaccinated, while next door Los Angeles County doesn't. "This creates inequities," she said Wednesday. Later in the day, the state of California said everyone over 65 is now eligible; but Ms. Santore said that vaccine distribution in the state remains a county-by-county process and the directive hasn't yet been formally communicated.

Providence could also get shots into arms more quickly if it could move vaccine doses across county or state lines, but that generally hasn't been allowed, Ms. Santore said.

Executives at Adventist Health Ukiah Valley hospital in California were sitting down to their morning meeting at the start of last week when a facilities director came in to tell them a freezer holding Moderna's vaccine had failed at 2 a.m. The 830 doses inside would be trashed unless they could find people to vaccinate before 2 p.m.

The hospital, which is located in Mendocino County, moved quickly, blasting employees with a text message and instructing them to spread the word, said Judson Howe, its president. The hospital gave some doses to county health officials, who rushed them to local corrections officers and other at-risk workers. Hundreds lined up at pop-up vaccine sites. Ultimately all shots were administered.

On Friday, Mendocino County received another shipment of 975 Pfizer doses, which County Health Commissioner Andy Coren said would be used at vaccination centers starting Tuesday. Dr. Coren said in a rural county like Mendocino it takes time to reach everyone eligible for early doses, including members of the Latino community, who he said make up a third of the local population but have suffered two-thirds of its Covid-19 cases.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/14 Indonesia plane crash preliminary probe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/indonesia-plane-crash-probes-focus-is-on-lack-of-pilot-response-to-controllers-11610612161?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/indonesia-plane-crash-probes-focus-is-on-lack-of-pilot-response-to-controllers-11610612161?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>



A communication breakdown between pilots and air-traffic controllers has emerged as an early focus of the investigation into [last weekend's crash](#) of a 1990s-era [Boeing](#) 737 in Indonesia, according to people with knowledge of the probe.

The cockpit crew of the Sriwijaya Air jet, [which plunged into the Java Sea minutes after takeoff](#), failed to acknowledge or respond to two radio transmissions from controllers questioning why the aircraft had shifted from its designated route during its climb away from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, the people said. Instead of flying northeast as expected, the plane veered northwest and at one point, a controller instructed the pilots to execute a turn to get back on track, one of these people said.

It is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the sequence of events before the crash that killed all 62 people on board, according to these people and safety experts not connected with the investigation.

Indonesian authorities said the aircraft's flight-data recorder, one of its so-called black boxes, was recovered by divers Tuesday and taken to a laboratory so its contents can be downloaded.

Authorities said they believe the location of the cockpit-voice recorder—which is the other black box—also has been identified, but rough seas prevented retrieval Wednesday.

For now, according to the safety experts, the crew's lack of response on the radio could indicate pilot confusion or distraction. One possibility is that a problem with some mechanical or flight-control system could have consumed the pilots' attention, they said.

Preliminary traffic-control information, the experts said, also raises the possibility that the 26-year old Boeing 737-500, which had been delayed for takeoff due to a storm, could have ended up flying through unexpected weather conditions. The jet quickly plunged more than 10,000 feet with its engines running, but there was no mayday call or emergency transmission from the cockpit, according to investigators and publicly available radar data. Experts said the descent appeared to be a near-vertical dive.

Barring damage to the recorders, data downloaded from them could, within days, provide direction for investigators by revealing details about changes in the jet's speed or trajectory, pilot actions, flight-control commands and potential system malfunctions.

Indonesia's transportation ministry said earlier that air-traffic controllers tried to communicate with the pilots to get the plane back on its designated course seconds before it disappeared from radar. Haryo Satmiko, deputy head of the national transportation safety committee, said via text message that air-traffic control tried to contact Sriwijaya Air Flight 182 more than once to ask why it unexpectedly changed direction.

Others familiar with the probe said the crew failed to respond to a second radio call asking about the plane's direction. That transmission came around the time the jet went into its fatal dive, one of the people said. The exact timing can't be determined until data from the recorders is downloaded.

Another person familiar with the probe said there was a further unsuccessful attempt to make radio contact with the plane after its disappearance from the radar, after which air-traffic control contacted other planes flying in the area to look for and try to contact Sriwijaya Air Flight 182.

Initial inspections of the jet's maintenance records haven't revealed irregularities, according to this person, although authorities will probe further.

Indonesian investigators haven't indicated what the focus of their investigation is. A Boeing Co. spokesman declined to comment.

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board, which is participating in the probe, is sending four officials to Indonesia, including operational and humanfactors experts. Boeing, engine maker General



	<p>Electric Co. and the Federal Aviation Administration are assisting the U.S. safety board. A safety board spokesman wasn't immediately available for comment.</p> <p>Flight 182's takeoff roll, lift off and early climb appeared normal, according to some of the people familiar with the probe. Despite a delay due to stormy weather, publicly available radar data indicates other jets seemingly departed without problems before and after the jet.</p> <p>While waiting to download data from the recorders, investigators are examining maintenance records, dissecting air-traffic control transmissions and interviewing pilots and mechanics who flew and worked on the Boeing 737-500 before its last flight.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Storm sewage spills into Puget Sound</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/2454809/power-outage-11-million-gallons-stormwater-sewage-puget-sound/">https://mynorthwest.com/2454809/power-outage-11-million-gallons-stormwater-sewage-puget-sound/</a>
GIST	<p>An "extensive" overnight power outage inadvertently allowed 11 million gallons of untreated wastewater to flow into Puget Sound Wednesday.</p> <p>The overflows — composed of 80% stormwater and 20% sewage — come from the <a href="#">West Point Treatment Plant</a> in Seattle, the Richmond Beach pump station in Shoreline, and another pump station in Medina.</p> <p>According to King County officials, "voltage fluctuations" occurring between 12 a.m. and 2 a.m. Wednesday caused pump stations to shut down repeatedly and overflow. Meanwhile, heavy rain and subsequent power outages exacerbated the situation.</p> <p>"Large volumes of rainfall throughout the day and into the night exceeded the capacity of the Richmond Beach pump station, and the volume of flow through the Medina Pump Station overwhelmed the station as it transitioned from line power to generator power and back to utility power," the county described in a news release.</p> <p>Outages had 17 of King County's 48 pump stations running on generator power before they were able to fully return to their primary utility power sources.</p> <p>Health and regulatory agencies have been notified of the overflows, and will soon test water quality and close down beaches at Discovery Park, Carkeek, Golden Gardens, Richmond, and Medina Park. People in those areas are advised to "avoid contact with the water over the next several days as a precaution to protect public health."</p> <p>Overnight rain and wind also saw hundreds of thousands of Puget Sound residents <a href="#">lose power in their homes</a>, while downed trees came down on roads, vehicles, and houses. As of Wednesday afternoon, providers were still working to restore power to tens of thousands of people.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Inauguration Day in Washington state</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/2453569/washington-state-inauguration-sworn-in-inslee/">https://mynorthwest.com/2453569/washington-state-inauguration-sworn-in-inslee/</a>
GIST	<p>It was Inauguration Day in Washington state on Wednesday, as Jay Inslee was sworn in for his third term as governor. The governor then gave an inaugural address, delivered via video to Washingtonians and a remote Legislature.</p> <p>The following newly elected or re-elected state officials were also sworn in at the same time as the governor: Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck, Secretary of State Kim Wyman, Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti,</p>

Attorney General Bob Ferguson, Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal, Auditor Pat McCarthy, Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler, and Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz.

Wyman was the lone Republican sworn in to a statewide position Wednesday. She, like Inslee, is also starting her third term in the role.

The ceremony and address was not open to the public because of COVID-19 restrictions and security concerns. It was available to [watch on TVW](#) starting at 11 a.m.

Gov. Inslee's third inaugural address was at 12:15 p.m., live streamed on TVW.

"I am so appreciative of this chance to serve again," Gov. Inslee said. "We are embarking on a truly historic third term and legislative session."

"So let's talk straight: The last year has been challenging in ways none of us have ever experienced," the governor continued. "It's the kind of moment where we are called upon to dig deep, to work together, and to be resourceful like never before. Washingtonians are answering that call."

By the end of this legislative session, Inslee says we'll be able to say Washington state is more equitable, has more opportunities for careers and affordable housing, and is more committed to fighting climate change than ever before.

"We have big challenges that demand we take big steps. We are not going back to normal. We are going forward toward a new normal," he said. "We are on a path in this legislative session to a more just normal, a healthier normal. And we're not just talking about the pandemic."

Gov. Inslee's address focused on what he referred to as the "ingredients" of relief, recovery, and resilience.

"[No] matter what has come our way, I am confident, because Washingtonians have risen to the challenge," he said. "We have seen remarkable heroism, diligence, and a stalwart commitment in our front-line workers; and we have seen it in all Washingtonians who know they are safer when every one of us is healthy. Washington is a resilient state. Washington knows how to recover. This is not going to stop Washington state's eternal march of progress to a more just and equitable community."

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Governors prepare for long-term dangers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/state-capitals-protests-governors/2021/01/13/d3ec0e7c-55c7-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/state-capitals-protests-governors/2021/01/13/d3ec0e7c-55c7-11eb-a08b-f1381ef3d207_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS — The nation's governors, facing increasing threats to their capitols and little support or information from the federal government, said Wednesday that they are bracing for long-term danger from extremist groups who already have breached government buildings, damaged property and been linked to threats against state leaders and their families.</p> <p>"It's going to take quite a while to turn back what's been started here," said Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (D), who has participated in joint calls in recent days with other Midwestern governors about the possibility of fresh violence in the aftermath of last week's riot at the U.S. Capitol and an FBI warning about armed far-right extremists gathering across the country this weekend.</p> <p>The weekly calls began last spring between the governors — mostly Democrats, but some Republicans — as a way to informally coordinate and trade ideas about how to respond to the coronavirus pandemic amid a perceived leadership vacuum by the Trump administration.</p>

But in recent days, the calls — which have included the governors of Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin — have taken on a new urgency as state officials have shared information and advice about how to confront what many believe could be a dark and dangerous period of extended insurgency against state and even local governments.

“This is going to be a reclamation project, and it’s going to be on several fronts,” Walz said Wednesday. Although he and other governors have been focusing on the immediate physical threats — securing buildings and protecting state lawmakers — the longer-term challenge is convincing Americans to turn away from “the partisan and false propaganda that’s poisoning where we are at, and that’s going to take quite a while.”

On the same day the pro-Trump mob attacked the U.S. Capitol, Walz’s 14-year-old son was evacuated from the governor’s mansion after a group of armed protesters gathered to cheer on the events in Washington, with one speaker promising there would be “casualties,” before marching to the residence.

The Minnesota State Patrol, which oversees security for the governor and his family, added more officers at the scene after an attendee shouted that Walz and his family should be taken prisoner.

Walz, whose state was prominently mentioned in a leaked FBI memo this week detailing threats of armed violence and protests in state capitols on Jan. 17, said state officials had been left largely alone to confront coming potential threats. He said he had not been briefed by any Trump administration officials about the FBI memo or any potential unrest.

“I think they’ve pretty much checked out of the game,” Walz said. “And you would think if there were credible threats after what we saw at the U.S. Capitol, that maybe the governor of Minnesota would get a call from an undersecretary or somebody just to let us know. But no.”

Walz on Wednesday joined governors in at least a half-dozen states, including North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon and Pennsylvania, who have activated National Guard troops amid fears of unrest.

State and local officials have declined to detail their security plans for the weekend through Inauguration Day. FBI Director Christopher A. Wray was set to hold a call with law enforcement leaders across the country Wednesday to brief them on the “state of play,” an FBI official said. The director on Monday briefed Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate, as agents continue to investigate last week’s attack and possible future threats to Washington and state capitols in the days ahead.

Even some local police departments far from their state’s capital are on heightened alert in case problems arise.

In New York, Westchester County told residents Wednesday that it was deploying additional police patrols through Inauguration Day “to enhance public safety and ensure” the county police force’s “ability to respond to any situation that may arise.” In Montana, the police department in Missoula announced Wednesday that it was boosting its preparedness because of its relative proximity to Helena, the state capital about 100 miles away.

“We fully support the Constitution of the United States, as well as the constitution of the state of Montana, that includes the freedom of speech, and the freedom to peacefully assemble,” said Missoula Police Chief Jaeson White, who is coordinating efforts with the county sheriff. “However, we do not support violence and we will enforce the law. . . . We are prepared for any civil unrest that may occur.”

But amid the preparations, state and local officials are increasingly worried that the nation has entered a long period of political upheaval, which will tax security resources for the foreseeable future.

“Trumpism is not dead and it won’t die on January 20,” D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) said in interview on CNN on Tuesday night, adding the nation’s leaders will have to work hard to mend the

country's political divisions. "In my view, we could be in for a very dangerous time in our country if we don't have leaders who speak up."

In Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee (D) signed an order Tuesday keeping 750 National Guard troops on duty protecting the Capitol complex through President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on Wednesday amid ongoing threats.

Chris Loftis, a spokesman for the Washington State Patrol, said authorities are racing to track numerous "general threats from specific groups and individuals." But Loftis cautions that law enforcement officials still have not matched any of the threats with specific details that would indicate imminent danger to the public or government buildings.

"We have a general understanding of people's intent to do harm, and are indicating they want to create havoc," Loftis said. "But we are trying to verify those things, and trying to separate out what someone is just spouting off from what someone has actually developed a plan to do."

Loftis declined to identify the groups that are linked to the threats, except to say they come from both "the right and the left." He added that many of the groups are well known to law enforcement because they have been involved in protest activity.

But in recent days, after the attack on the U.S. Capitol, Loftis said the leaders of some of the groups have "gone dark and gone quiet" and in some cases told law enforcement officials that they are now urging their supporters to stay home. Loftis said leaders of some of those groups have told police that "even though they have canceled those events, they couldn't speak or control all of the elements within their following."

"And we are aware it only takes a small group of folks to do anything and everything," Loftis added.

Residents and government leaders in Olympia, the Washington state capital, have been on edge since about 100 pro-Trump demonstrators, some armed, stormed the gate of the Governor's Mansion on Jan. 6 and marched to its front door while Inslee was inside.

Loftis said it was the first time in 100 years that demonstrators had breached the gate of the mansion, which the Washington State Patrol protects. Loftis said the demonstrators shook the mansion's metal security fence with so much force that it popped open, and the crowd stormed past an armed guard.

Loftis said the unrest, which occurred on the same day that the U.S. Capitol was attacked, is likely to have far-reaching consequences for how governments and law enforcement agencies across the country view security at "state capitols, county courthouses and city council meeting rooms."

"This was a page-turning event ... This is going to ripple across the nation," Loftis said. "Just as schools have had to deal with increasing violence, legislative and judicial facilities are going to have to recognize we are in a new world of elevated acceptance of conflict."

It isn't just Democratic-led states that were bracing for potential unrest.

In deeply conservative Oklahoma, security has been increased around the Capitol building in Oklahoma City out of caution. And as Texas lawmakers gathered for the opening day of the legislative session in Austin on Tuesday, they were greeted by scores of state troopers, many in riot gear including face shields and tactical vests, who had been deployed to protect the building.

Among the protesters on site were disaffected conservatives, including many who were armed, who said they were angry at the state's Republican Gov. Greg Abbott for business shutdowns during the coronavirus pandemic and for not standing up more forcefully to Democrats on other issues. "Gov. Greg Abbott is a Democrat! Change my mind," one protester's sign read.

Martin Holsome, who sits on the Rusk City Council and is aligned with several armed Texas groups including the Three Percenters, said he is planning to hold a gathering at the state Capitol on Saturday. Rusk is mounting a long-shot bid to unseat Abbott in the state's 2022 GOP primary, arguing the governor has been too willing to consider additional restrictions on firearms.

Holsome estimated that there are as many as 35,000 Texans closely aligned with heavily armed, far-right militarized groups. But after last week's mob assault in Washington — Holsome did not attend — he says there is considerable disagreement among members of those groups about how to proceed during future demonstrations in Austin.

Some members of far-right groups, Holsome said, "want to take over the capital of Texas" to express their frustration with Trump's election loss as well as their broader concerns that America's electoral system is "broken" because of allegations of fraud.

But Holsome said he and plenty of other adherents of far-right views strongly believe that any violence, at least for now, is misguided.

"You would have to fight the Capitol Police ... You got to fight the Texas Rangers ... And even if you are Mr. John Rambo himself, the FBI [will be] on their way their down there," Holsome said. "And say you are superman, and beat every one of those guys — you slay over 10,000 people in breaching the Capitol — then what are you going to do?"

Still, he warned that disgruntled Trump supporters need to be prepared to both make their case politically, as well as prepare for possible conflict in the weeks and months ahead because he fears "Democrats and socialists" are pushing the country toward "civil war."

"If you are doing something to me I don't like, if I punch you in your freaking teeth, you are going to stop doing what you are doing," he said.

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HEADLINE	01/13 WHO in China; faces hurdles
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#a-who-team-is-in-china-to-investigate-the-virus-here-are-some-of-the-hurdles-it-faces">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#a-who-team-is-in-china-to-investigate-the-virus-here-are-some-of-the-hurdles-it-faces</a>
GIST	<p>More than a year after a new coronavirus first emerged in China, a team of experts from the World Health Organization <a href="#">finally arrived on Thursday in the central city of Wuhan</a> to begin hunting for its source.</p> <p>The investigation by the team of 10 scientists is a critical step in understanding how the virus jumped to humans from animals so that another pandemic can be avoided. Getting answers will most likely be difficult.</p> <p>Here's what to know about the investigation.</p> <p><b>China set up hurdles and pushed for control.</b> Seemingly worried about drawing renewed attention to the country's <a href="#">early mistakes in handling the pandemic</a>, Chinese officials have used a variety of tactics over the past year to hinder the W.H.O. investigation.</p> <p>After resisting demands from other countries that it allow independent investigators onto its soil to study the origin of the pathogen, China finally let two W.H.O. experts <a href="#">visit in July</a> to lay the groundwork. They were not permitted to visit Wuhan, where the virus first emerged.</p>

For months, China delayed approving a visit by a full team of experts, frustrating the health agency's leaders. When the visit seemed to be finalized earlier this month, it fell apart at the last minute when Beijing failed to provide visas for the visitors, according to the health agency.

Critics say Beijing's desire for control means the inquiry will most likely be more political than scientific.

#### **Tracing the virus will be a painstaking task.**

The team that arrived in Wuhan will face a city radically transformed from when the virus first emerged, in late 2019. The city that went into lockdown on Jan. 23 last year and became a symbol of the virus's devastation has been held up by Chinese officials a year later as [a success story in vanquishing the virus](#).

The W.H.O. experts have decades of experience plumbing the depths of viruses, animal health and disease control. But tracing the source of the virus that as of Thursday has killed almost two million people worldwide and infected more than 92 million will be painstaking. While experts believe the virus originated naturally in animals, [possibly bats](#), little else is known.

How much access the team gets in China will be critical, public health experts say.

#### **The team will have to sidestep attempts to politicize its inquiry.**

The pandemic has hurt China's reputation, with many foreign governments still angry that Beijing did not do more to contain the crisis in its earliest stages. So Chinese propagandists are trying to use the W.H.O. inquiry to help shore up China's image and to portray the country as a mature superpower.

Complicating that effort could be new virus flare-ups in recent weeks that have prompted fresh lockdowns in China. In all, [more than 22 million people have been ordered to remain inside](#) their homes — double the number affected a year ago in Wuhan. On Thursday, China's National Health Commission reported a coronavirus death in the mainland for the first time since May.

"The major concern here is the origin of the outbreak has been so politicized," said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. "That has really narrowed the space for the W.H.O. to have an independent, objective and scientific investigation."

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HEADLINE	01/13 California region emerging from lockdown
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#there-are-some-good-things-to-report-one-california-region-is-emerging-from-lockdown">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#there-are-some-good-things-to-report-one-california-region-is-emerging-from-lockdown</a>
GIST	<p>The overwhelming Covid-19 surge in California is as deadly now as it has ever been, and hospitals in much of the state are still full to bursting. But officials see signs that the situation may soon stop getting worse.</p> <p>"There are some good things to report," Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a video message posted late Tuesday night. "We're starting to see some stabilization both in I.C.U.s as well as in our positivity rate."</p>

One region of the state, the area around Sacramento, has improved enough to lift a strict stay-at-home order and allow some businesses to reopen at partial capacity, including restaurants offering outdoor dining and hair salons.

Three other large regions, home to tens of millions of people, remain under the most stringent tier of restrictions, which shut down nearly all nonessential businesses and ban residents from gathering with anyone they do not live with.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, the state's secretary of health and human services, said Tuesday that the number of Covid-19 patients being admitted to hospitals each day was dropping. He called that "the biggest signal to me that things are beginning to flatten and potentially improve."

Nationwide, the numbers largely remained grim, though in the Northern Plains, cases this week were about a quarter of their peak in mid-November, when the region was among the hardest hit in the country. A day after the U.S. recorded yet another daily record for deaths — more than 4,400 — reported deaths remained high on Wednesday.

And even as the pressure eased in some parts of California, hospitals across Southern California and the Central Valley were full, and the state reported a record total of more than 720 Covid-related deaths on Tuesday, according to a New York Times database.

California has struggled to get its vaccination program into high gear, and had only used one-quarter of its available doses by Tuesday. Governor Newsom said Wednesday that the state would start a new system to alert residents when they're eligible.

"There is no higher priority than efficiently and equitably distributing these vaccines as quickly as possible to those who face the gravest consequences," he said in a statement. "To those not yet eligible for vaccines, your turn is coming. We are doing everything we can to bring more vaccine into the state."

Dr. David Lubarsky, the chief executive of U.C. Davis Health, said Tuesday that the top priority should be getting shots into arms, rather than spending resources to ensure that people don't cut the line. "If you are so hellbent on making sure Patient A should come before Patient B, before Citizen C, you can't get people in the door in a sufficient manner," he said.

Dr. Lubarsky said that as of Tuesday, roughly 12,000 of U.C. Davis Health's 13,000 employees had received at least a first vaccine dose. New Covid cases among the staff plummeted to about 20 in the last week, from a recent average of 135 a week.

Setting up mass vaccination centers and opening up eligibility are positive steps for the state, he said.

"I think they are moving 100 percent in the right direction," Dr. Lubarsky said.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 More than 10% Congress tested positive</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#more-than-10-percent-of-the-us-congress-has-tested-positive">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#more-than-10-percent-of-the-us-congress-has-tested-positive</a>



GIST	<p>At least 60 sitting members of Congress — more than one in 10 — have tested positive for the coronavirus or are believed to have had Covid-19 at some point since the pandemic began. The list includes 44 Republicans and 16 Democrats.</p> <p>That’s a higher proportion than the general population. As of Wednesday, a bit fewer than one in 14 Americans were known to have had the virus, according to a New York Times database, though many more cases have probably gone undetected.</p> <p>Five House members have reported positive tests since the attack on the Capitol last week, when many lawmakers were holed up in a secure location together and some refused to wear masks — a situation that angered several Democrats, including Representative Pramila Jayapal of Washington, one of those who has since tested positive.</p> <p>And on Wednesday, Representative Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts said that her husband, Conan Harris, who was at the Capitol to see her sworn in, has also tested positive. In a statement, Ms. Pressley said that Republican colleagues who had refused to wear masks while in a “confined space” had displayed an “arrogant disregard for the lives of others.”</p> <p>Congress’s attending physician warned members afterward that it was possible they were exposed while sheltering and recommended that they be tested.</p> <p>Congress has struggled to stem the spread within its ranks in recent weeks. Most members who have tested positive have done so since the election in November, as cases have surged across the country.</p> <p>Representative Jake LaTurner, Republican of Kansas, said he received word just after the attack on the Capitol last Wednesday that he had tested positive. He did not return to the House floor for a vote early on Thursday.</p> <p>Representative Gus Bilirakis of Florida and Representative Michelle Steel of California, both Republicans, were absent from the House floor when the mob entered the Capitol because each had received positive test results earlier that morning. Representative Chuck Fleischmann, Republican of Tennessee, said on Sunday that he had tested positive after exposure to Mr. Bilirakis, with whom he shares a residence.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Poor countries hopes dim w/China vaccine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#downgraded-results-on-chinese-vaccines-dim-hopes-in-poorer-countries-that-are-counting-on-them">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#downgraded-results-on-chinese-vaccines-dim-hopes-in-poorer-countries-that-are-counting-on-them</a>
GIST	<p>Scientists in Brazil have downgraded the efficacy rate of a Chinese coronavirus vaccine that they hailed last week as a major triumph, <a href="#">diminishing hopes for a shot that could be quickly produced and easily distributed</a> to the developing world.</p> <p>Officials at the Butantan Institute in São Paulo said on Tuesday that a trial conducted in Brazil showed that CoronaVac, the vaccine manufactured by the Beijing-based company Sinovac, had an efficacy rate of just over 50 percent. That rate, slightly above the benchmark that the World Health Organization has said would make a vaccine effective for general use, was far below the 78 percent level <a href="#">announced last week</a>.</p>

The implications could be significant for a vaccine that is crucial to China's [global health diplomacy](#). At least 10 countries have ordered more than 380 million doses of CoronaVac, though regulatory agencies have yet to fully approve it.

The announcement could also be a setback for China's biotech ambitions.

For months, Chinese officials had said that the vaccines made by Sinovac and Sinopharm, a state-owned company, would be important tools for fighting the pandemic in poorer countries that do not have extensive health care infrastructures. Unlike the vaccines made by the American drugmakers [Pfizer](#) and [Moderna](#), they do not need to be frozen.

The [Oxford-AstraZeneca](#) and [Johnson&Johnson](#) vaccines could provide an alternative, but it is unclear if the governments that have bought CoronaVac can get out of their deals and seek other options.

In response to the CoronaVac trial, Natalia Pasternak, a microbiologist, told reporters on Tuesday, "It is not the best vaccine in the world," but added that CoronaVac is a "perfectly acceptable vaccine" that would mean fewer serious cases and deaths. Ms. Pasternak is the president of [Instituto Questão de Ciência](#), a Brazilian organization dedicated to promoting science.

Many of the countries that have ordered CoronaVac are relatively poor, desperate to halt the pandemic and protect their populations.

Indonesia, for example, has ordered 125.5 million doses. The country has reported nearly 850,000 coronavirus cases and nearly 25,000 deaths, the highest numbers in Southeast Asia. On Wednesday morning, its president, Joko Widodo, was [injected with CoronaVac on live television](#).

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 'Unacceptable' kids' food parcels in UK</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/world/europe/food-packages-students-UK.html?action=click&amp;module=News&amp;pgtype=Homepage">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/world/europe/food-packages-students-UK.html?action=click&amp;module=News&amp;pgtype=Homepage</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON — The food package, spread out on a carpet, included a can of beans, an assortment of fruit, vegetables, snacks, and sliced bread and cheese — provisions from a government program that provides low-income students with free lunches.</p> <p>But when pictures of the packages, delivered to students at home as lockdowns have shuttered schools across Britain, circulated on social media this week, they were roundly condemned by parents and anti-hunger activists like the soccer star Marcus Rashford.</p> <p>The portions were meager, raising concerns about whether children were getting enough nutrition during the coronavirus pandemic, and the government had overpaid for them, the critics said.</p> <p>"Public funds were charged £30," or more than \$40, said one parent, who posted a widely shared photo on Twitter of one package that she said was supposed to last 10 days. Compared with items at her local supermarket, she said, "I'd have bought this for £5.22."</p> <p>Chartwells, a contractor responsible for providing the lunch package circulated on Twitter, said on Tuesday that the photo contained enough for five days of school lunches, not 10, and that the charge for it, including distribution costs, totaled about \$14.</p> <p>But that was not enough to tamp down the outcry, and on Wednesday the government said it would reinstate voucher programs next week that would give parents the option to buy meals themselves.</p> <p>Under the program, schools receiving funding to provide lunch for lower-income students gained incentives if they sent lunch packages to their homes. The food items, according to the Department of</p>

Education's website, should be used to prepare "healthy lunches" and cater to students with "special diets."

The mother whose photo went viral said she welcomed the news of the turnaround. "Most people can get a lot more mileage out of the vouchers than anything that's been put out in the bags and boxes," the woman, identified only as Lisa, said on the [Leading Britain's Conversation radio station](#).

On Monday, Chartwells said it would refund costs "where our food parcels had not met our usual high standards" and would "apologize to anyone affected." A free breakfast would be included in packages sent out from Jan. 25, they added.

Mr. Rashford, who plays for Manchester United and has been a driving force for free meal programs during the pandemic, called the packages "unacceptable" and [said that Prime Minister Boris Johnson had promised him](#) a "full review of the supply chain."

"These food parcels do not meet the standards we set out and we have made it clear to the company involved that this is disgraceful," Mr. Johnson [said on Twitter](#).

"The photos being shared on social media last night and today are completely unacceptable and do not reflect the high standard of free school meals we expect to be sent to children," said Vicky Ford, minister for children and families.

But some critics accused the government of shifting blame onto contractors and said it was a sign of wider struggles that marginalized people faced with Britain deep in another lockdown.

"It's really shocking that profiteering is happening in this crisis," said Kath Dalmeny, chief executive of Sustain, a food and farming charity. She added that there was a lack of transparency around how big companies won contracts and that the government had not adequately recognized that low-income families would struggle to get food during the lockdown.

The free meals program was offered to [students from households receiving government benefits](#), including those earning less than 7,400 pounds a year after tax.

But families earning above that threshold also struggle to put food on the table, said Ms. Dalmeny. "There is a political deep prejudice among our government against giving people money — even in a pandemic," she added. "Unfortunately it's the kids who end up suffering."

The incident was part of a pattern of private companies being given government contracts scrimping on quality to maximize profits, according to [The Good Law Project](#), a governance watchdog. Mr. Johnson's government has awarded [billions of dollars worth of pandemic-related contracts](#) to companies with political connections, no relevant experience and histories of controversy, often fast-tracking them ahead of competitors.

"There is a culture of central government just not being interested in delivering high-quality services to the population," said Jolyon Maugham, the group's director, adding that the country needed more ways to seek accountability and transparency.

About 1.4 million children claimed free school meals in the 2019-2020 school year, according to [government figures](#).

Of the photographs, Ms. Dalmeny said they went viral because they spoke to people's hearts. "If you imagine feeding a child on that, week after week."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/business/auto-factories-semiconductor-chips.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/business/auto-factories-semiconductor-chips.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business</a>
GIST	<p>Automakers braced for turmoil when the pandemic hit. They expected supply chain disruptions and plummeting sales. But they never figured that a year later one of their biggest problems would be PlayStations.</p> <p>Strong demand for gaming systems, personal computers and other electronics by a world stuck indoors has sucked up supplies of semiconductors, forcing carmakers around the world to scramble for the chips that have become as essential to mobility as gasoline or steel.</p> <p>Virtually no carmaker has been spared. Toyota Motor has shut down production lines in China. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles temporarily stopped production at plants in Ontario and Mexico. Volkswagen has <a href="#">warned of production problems</a> at factories in China, Europe and the United States. Ford Motor said last week that it was idling a Louisville, Ky., factory for a week because of the shortage.</p> <p>When Covid-19 hit, automakers slashed orders for chips in anticipation of plunging sales. At the same time, semiconductor makers shifted their production lines to meet surging orders for chips used in products like laptop computers, webcams, tablets and 5G smartphones.</p> <p>Businesses also upgraded their digital infrastructure to handle online meetings and employees working from home, while telecommunications companies invested in broadband infrastructure, further fueling demand for semiconductors.</p> <p>Then auto sales bounced back faster than expected at the end of 2020, catching everyone off guard. The shortages of chips that ensued are expected to last well into 2021, because it can take semiconductor makers six to nine months to realign production.</p> <p>“Consumer electronics exploded,” said Dan Hirsch, a managing director at the consulting firm AlixPartners. “Everybody and their brother wanted to buy an Xbox and PlayStation and laptops, while automotive shut down. Then automotive came back faster than expected, and that’s where you get into this problem.”</p> <p>While the shortage is not expected to cause auto prices to rise very much, buyers might have to wait longer to get the vehicles they want.</p> <p>The chip shortage has its roots in long-term forces reshaping the auto and semiconductor industries, as well as short-term confusion from the pandemic.</p> <p>During the past decade, carmakers have become <a href="#">increasingly dependent on electronics</a> to boost the appeal of their products, adding features such as touch screens, computerized engine controls and transmissions, built-in cellular and Wi-Fi connections, and collision avoidance systems that use cameras and other sensors.</p> <p>New cars can have more than a hundred semiconductors, and the lack of even a single component can trigger production delays or shutdowns, industry analysts and consultants said.</p> <p>Long-term pressure on chip makers to control production costs has also played a role. Semiconductor companies that supply the auto industry, such as Infineon, NXP Semiconductors and Renesas, chose to have their most advanced chips made for them by external manufacturing services, known as foundries. But the manufacturers also maintain their own factories to make simpler auto chips, frequently fabricating them on eight-inch silicon wafers rather than the 12-inch discs used in more modern plants.</p> <p>Manufacturers with plants using older eight-inch wafers weren’t easily able to increase production. They hadn’t invested much lately in new equipment, which is now harder to find because that technology is older, said Syed Alam, global lead for Accenture’s global semiconductor consulting practice.</p>

Geopolitics also played a role. The Trump administration in September placed restrictions on Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation, China's main foundry, which produces chips for cars and many other applications. The company's customers began looking for alternatives, generating additional competition for chip supplies from other foundries, said Gaurav Gupta, a vice president at the research firm Gartner.

The chip crisis is an example of how the pandemic has shaken the global economy in unpredictable ways. Carmakers expected to face supply chain shortages, and plants closed early in 2020 because of fear that workers would infect one another, or because trucking firms had stopped delivering. Most U.S. auto factories ceased production for roughly two months last spring.

But suppliers and carmakers quickly found ways to contain contagion within factories and got assembly lines going again. The impact on most parts supplies was less than feared.

The semiconductor shortage came out of left field, hitting the industry at a perilous moment. Sales have plunged worldwide. In Europe, for example, they were down 25 percent in 2020.

This is all happening while automakers are trying to navigate a shift in basic technology from internal combustion engines to batteries, which has subjected them to new competition from Tesla, the California company that has become the most valuable automaker in the world by far, and emerging Chinese manufacturers like Nio.

Exactly how long the shortage will last is unclear. It can take 20 to 25 weeks from the time new orders are placed for chips to be produced and work through the supply chain to reach cars, said Michael Hogan, a senior vice president at GlobalFoundries, a big chip manufacturer that services the auto industry and other markets.

"We are doing everything humanly possible to prioritize our output for automotive," Mr. Hogan said.

The German auto electronics supplier Bosch said the shortage was particularly acute for integrated circuits used to control engines, transmissions and other key functions. "Despite the difficult market situation, Bosch is doing all it can to keep its customers supplied and to keep any further impact to a minimum," the company said in a statement.

Carmakers and suppliers are reacting as best they can. BMW, based in Munich, said it had been able to maintain production but was "observing the situation intensively" and in constant contact with suppliers.

For carmakers already stressed by the pandemic, some impact is inevitable. Honda said on Wednesday that it would shut down some production activities at its plant in Swindon, England, which builds Civics, for at least four days starting Monday. Honda cited supply chain problems, including shortages of semiconductors.

The German supplier Continental, which is best known for tires but also produces electronic components, called on semiconductor producers to build up capacity in the foundries that produce chips.

"Future investment in these foundries will therefore be critical so that the automotive industry can avoid such supply chain upheavals in the future," Continental said in a statement.

Infineon, based in Munich, said it was stepping up investment in new production capacity in 2021 to as much as 1.5 billion euros, or \$1.8 billion, from €1.1 billion in 2020. The company is also ramping up production at a new chip factory in Villach, Austria, that will produce 12-inch wafers.

But it will take time for the semiconductor makers to catch up. In the meantime, PlayStations have priority.

	“Automotive came back and they are not the front of the line for chips anymore,” said Gary Silberg, global head of the automotive practice at KPMG.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 US Space Command moves to Alabama</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jan/13/us-space-command-move-huntsville-alabama/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jan/13/us-space-command-move-huntsville-alabama/</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Air Force picked Huntsville, Alabama to be the home of U.S. Space Command, the 11th and most recently established unified combatant command.</p> <p>The eagerly anticipated decision was not without controversy, as lawmakers in the command’s temporary home of Colorado immediately charged that politics affected the choice.</p> <p>The home of Redstone Arsenal and the Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville won out in a fierce competition with several other candidates, including San Antonio; Albuquerque, Cape Canaveral in Florida and Colorado Spring, Colorado — where the command was provisionally based after being signed into law in 2019. Its mission is to coordinate the military’s role in space operations and is separate from President Trump’s newly created Space Force, which will be a separate service under the Pentagon equivalent to the Army, Navy and Air Force.</p> <p>Air Force officials said Huntsville was best suited based on several factors including infrastructure capacity, community support and cost to the Defense Department.</p> <p>The command is likely to be a prime attraction for federal spending and spinoff private sector development.</p> <p>“Redstone Arsenal offered a facility to support the headquarters, at no cost, while the permanent facility is being constructed,” Air Force officials said in a statement.</p> <p>Alabama Republican Gov. Kay Ivey was quick to announce Huntsville’s selection after she was notified of the selection early Wednesday by Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Bob Moriarty.</p> <p>“This combination only enhances the outstanding relationships we have with the 65 diverse federal agencies on Redstone Arsenal, not to mention the growing presence of the FBI and other federal installations,” she said in a statement. “The bottom line is simple, the Redstone Region is the most natural choice to become home to such an important mission for our country.”</p> <p>The Marshall Space Flight Center, also located on Redstone Arsenal, is the home of the government’s civilian rocketry and spacecraft propulsion research. The Saturn rocket, used by the Apollo program, was developed there.</p> <p>Air Force officials said they conducted both virtual and on-site visits to determine which location to pick.</p> <p>Huntsville compared favorably on more counts than any of its rivals, they said.</p> <p>U.S. Space Command has been based at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado on a provisional basis and Colorado Gov. Jared Polis lobbied heavily for it to remain there. Mr Polis, a Democrat, said the decision to move the operation — and at least 1,500 jobs — to a reliably red state like Alabama was based on partisan politics.</p> <p>“Reports that the in-depth military process found Colorado Springs to be the best location for military readiness and cost and recommended Colorado to the president, only to be overruled for politically</p>

	<p>motivated reasons, are deeply disconcerting,” he said in a statement along with Colorado Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera.</p> <p>He said the move could cause serious economic damage to the region and upend the lives of hundreds of military and civilian families that had already established homes in Colorado Springs.</p> <p>Colorado’s two Democratic senators, Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper, said they were “deeply disappointed” about the move and said they are concerned the decision came from the Trump White House and was made for political reasons.</p> <p>“We do not believe this decision reflects the best choice or even a rational choice for our national security and ability to confront threats in space,” they wrote in a statement.</p> <p>They said they will work with the incoming Biden administration to have the decision reviewed.</p> <p>“We believe a process based on the merits will keep Space Command in Colorado. There is no role for politics when it comes to our national security,” the lawmakers wrote.</p> <p>Colorado Springs will remain the “provisional” headquarters until Huntsville is ready to fully support the mission, Air Force officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 More use force against left-wing protesters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/us-police-use-of-force-protests-black-lives-matter-far-right">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/us-police-use-of-force-protests-black-lives-matter-far-right</a>
GIST	<p>Police in the United States are three times more likely to use force against leftwing protesters than rightwing protesters, according to new data from a nonprofit that monitors political violence around the world.</p> <p>In the past 10 months, US law enforcement agencies have used teargas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and beatings at a much higher percentage at Black Lives Matter demonstrations than at pro-Trump or other rightwing protests.</p> <p>Law enforcement officers were also more likely to use force against leftwing demonstrators, whether the protests remained peaceful or not.</p> <p>The statistics, based on law enforcement responses to more than 13,000 protests across the United States since April 2020, show a clear disparity in how agencies have responded to the historic wave of Black Lives Matter protests against police violence, compared with demonstrations organized by Trump supporters.</p> <p>Barack Obama highlighted an <a href="#">earlier version of these statistics</a> on 8 January, arguing that they provided a “useful frame of reference” for understanding Americans’ outrage over the failure of Capitol police to stop a mob of thousands of white Trump supporters from invading and looting the Capitol on 6 January, a response that prompted renewed scrutiny of the level of violence and aggression American police forces use against Black versus white Americans.</p> <p>The new statistics come from the <a href="#">US Crisis Monitor</a>, a database created this spring by researchers at Princeton and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (<a href="#">ACLED</a>), a nonprofit that has previously monitored civil unrest in the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America.</p> <p>The researchers found that the vast majority of the thousands of protests across the United States in the past year have been peaceful, and that most protests by both the left and the right were not met with any violent response by law enforcement.</p>



Police used teargas, rubber bullets, beatings with batons, and other force against demonstrators at 511 leftwing protests and 33 rightwing protests since April, according to updated data made public this week.

The Guardian compared the percentage of all demonstrations organized by leftwing and rightwing groups that resulted in the use of force by law enforcement. For leftwing demonstrations, that was about 4.7% of protests, while for rightwing demonstrations, it was about 1.4%, meaning law enforcement was about three times more likely to use force against leftwing versus rightwing protests.

The disparity in police response only grew when comparing peaceful leftwing versus rightwing protests. Looking at the subset of protests in which demonstrators did not engage in any violence, vandalism, or looting, law enforcement officers were about 3.5 times more likely to use force against leftwing protests than rightwing protests, with about 1.8% of peaceful leftwing protests and only half a percent of peaceful rightwing protests met with teargas, rubber bullets or other force from law enforcement.

“Police are not just engaging more because [leftwing protesters] are more violent. They’re engaging more even with peaceful protesters,” Dr Roudabeh Kishi, ACLED’s director of research and innovation, told the Guardian. “That’s the clear trend.”

ACLED’s data also shows that US law enforcement agencies were more likely to intervene in leftwing versus rightwing protests in general, and more likely to use force when they intervened. American law enforcement agencies made arrests or other interventions in 9% of the 10,863 Black Lives Matter and other leftwing protests between 1 April 2020 and 8 January, compared with only 4% of the 2,295 rightwing protests.

Half of the time police made any intervention into a leftwing protest, it involved using violent force, ACLED found, compared with only about a third of the time for rightwing protests.

Overall, 94% of the leftwing demonstrations in the past ten months were peaceful, compared with 96% of the rightwing demonstrations, according to ACLED’s most recently updated data. Kishi cautioned that the process of categorizing demonstrations as peaceful did not take into account whether demonstrators who engaged in violence or property damage were responding to aggressive or violent behavior from the police.

The US Crisis Monitor previously found that, despite Trump’s rhetoric and the intense media coverage of property damage or violence during protests this summer against police violence, [more than 93% of Black Lives Matter protests](#) since April had involved no harm to people or damage to property.

The majority of the protests ACLED categorized as leftwing were Black Lives Matter demonstrations, but also included pro-Biden demonstrations; protests by left-leaning groups such as Abolish ICE, the NAACP, or the Democratic Socialists of America; and protests associated with anti-fascists or left-leaning militia groups and street movements.

The rightwing protests included pro-Trump and pro-police demonstrations, including “Blue Lives Matter” rallies; rightwing protests against coronavirus public health restrictions; protests involving QAnon conspiracy theory supporters and others associated with the “Save Our Children” movement; and the “Stop the Steal” rallies promoting Trump’s false claims about his 2020 election loss.

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HEADLINE	01/13 FBI warns police: high alert for threats
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/fbi-police-threats-inauguration.html?action=click&amp;module=Spotlight&amp;pgtype=Homepage">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/fbi-police-threats-inauguration.html?action=click&amp;module=Spotlight&amp;pgtype=Homepage</a>
GIST	KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The F.B.I. on Wednesday urged police chiefs across the country to be on high alert for extremist activity and to share intelligence on any threats they encounter, as the

U.S. government issued a dire intelligence bulletin warning of potential violence ahead of the inauguration.

In the call with police chiefs, Christopher Wray, the F.B.I. director, and Kenneth Cuccinelli, the acting deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, warned about potential attacks on state capitols, federal buildings, the homes of congressional members and businesses, according to one of the chiefs on the call. The officials failed to identify any specific threats, participants said, but called on law enforcement officers across the country to watch for signs of trouble, no matter how small.

“They don’t want to be dismissive of anything,” Chief Jorge Colina of the Miami Police Department, one of thousands of officials participating in the call, said in an interview. “So even if it sounds aspirational, even if it’s just like, ‘Yeah, it’d be great if the whole place is burned down,’ they don’t want us to think, ‘Ah, that’s just some knucklehead, pinhead,’ and be dismissive.”

The federal authorities also issued a joint intelligence bulletin warning that the deadly breach at the Capitol last week would be a “significant driver of violence” for armed militia groups and racist extremists who are targeting the presidential inauguration next week.

Extremists aiming to trigger a race war “may exploit the aftermath of the Capitol breach by conducting attacks to destabilize and force a climactic conflict in the United States,” officials wrote in the bulletin issued by the National Counterterrorism Center and the Justice and Homeland Security Departments, which was disseminated widely to law enforcement agencies around the country.

In Washington, the state of readiness remained high, with Chief Robert J. Contee III of the Metropolitan Police Department saying on Wednesday that he expected more than 20,000 members of the National Guard in the Washington region on Inauguration Day. It remains unclear how many of the Guard members will carry weapons.

On Tuesday night, Defense Department officials said that the Army secretary, Ryan McCarthy, [had decided to arm National Guard members](#) who will be deployed to protect the Capitol building complex as Mr. Biden is sworn into office.

The number of National Guard troops in Washington may ultimately stretch beyond 20,000; the figure has been rapidly climbing in recent days as intelligence officials monitoring pro-Trump groups online have grown increasingly worried that militant, far-right organizations have plans for violent protests in Washington.

The decision to arm the Guard members illuminates the gnawing uncertainty of the past week. Members of Congress expressed concern about their return to the Capitol after they were briefed on several active threats against them, and the F.B.I. has warned of [possible violence at all 50 state capitol buildings](#).

Defense Department officials met with Washington authorities on Wednesday to work on plans to try to ensure there is not a repeat of last week’s violent breach. The scope of the protests and the violence of the mob took law enforcement by surprise.

A Pentagon official expressed worry about a repeat of the pipe bombs that were placed in Washington last week. The official said the law enforcement agencies are also concerned that some protesters have threatened to show up at the homes of lawmakers, or to target their families.

On the call with police chiefs, federal officials said they were closely monitoring extremist communications online and urged the chiefs to be mindful of potential lone-wolf actors and local armed groups, said Chief Chris Magnus of Tucson, adding that he had rarely heard federal officials this alarmed.

“They’re very, very worried about these, what they referred to as domestic violent extremists, embedding themselves in other protests,” he said. “Christopher Wray seemed particularly concerned about what was sort of the disregard these folks have for democratic government.”

There was also some discussion about balancing the rights of protesters against the threat of violence.

“I think the message is they want everyone to have their First Amendment rights and be able to assemble without any government intrusion,” said Chief Rick Smith of Kansas City, Mo., who was on the call. “At the same time, how do you prevent violence?”

In the bulletin, written by the National Counterterrorism Center and the Justice and Homeland Security Departments and obtained by The New York Times, federal officials said that extremist groups have viewed the breach of the Capitol as a success and have been galvanized by the death of Ashli Babbitt, a military veteran and QAnon follower who was shot by the police as she tried to enter the heavily protected Speaker’s Lobby, just outside the House chamber. The extremists could perceive that death as “an act of martyrdom,” they said.

Officials warned of possible activity by the “boogaloo,” a movement that seeks to start a second civil war. They also wrote that “the shared false narrative of a ‘stolen’ election,” a narrative that has been perpetuated by President Trump, “may lead some individuals to adopt the belief that there is no political solution to address their grievances and violent action is necessary.”

Antigovernment militias and extremist groups “very likely pose the greatest domestic terrorism threats in the 2021,” said the bulletin, which was dated Jan. 13.

Already, state and local officials are taking preparations into their own hands.

In Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown activated the National Guard “to assist with potential upcoming civil unrest,” the Oregon State Police said Wednesday. Authorities did not identify the locations the National Guard would be deployed, but troops in neighboring Washington State have used the Guard in recent days to protect the state’s Capitol building.

“The recent events at our Nation’s Capitol building and at our own statehouse illustrate the need for law enforcement to be prepared and appropriately staffed for any large gatherings,” Oregon State Police Superintendent Terri Davie said in a statement.

The National Guard was also assisting in state capitols in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Law enforcement presence has intensified at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, with California Highway Patrol officers on standby and outside at the entrances, and with squad cars parked on the grounds, blocking walkways. The F.B.I. has set up a joint command post with local authorities in Sacramento, and members of state, federal and local law enforcement have been meeting daily.

Even though Los Angeles officials have not received specific threats, the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department has ordered all officers, close to 10,000 people, to be in uniform every day leading up to the inauguration so they are ready to be deployed at a moment's notice. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has adjusted staffing levels in anticipation of protest activity.

Part of the challenge for law enforcement agencies collecting intelligence was weeding out "aspirational" commentary, said Chief Colina of Miami. On the call Wednesday, the F.B.I. acknowledged the uneasiness felt across the nation in the wake of the attack on the U.S. Capitol, he said.

"It kind of shook everyone up, you know, seeing what happened at the Capitol. It gives you a terrible feeling of uneasiness, and so, they're concerned with that," he said, adding, "They're concerned with the mind-set of, 'Are we safe here in this country?'"

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**(U//FOUO) Domestic Violent Extremists Emboldened in Aftermath of Capitol Breach, Elevated Domestic Terrorism Threat of Violence Likely Amid Political Transitions and Beyond**

**(U) Scope**

(U//FOUO) This *Joint Intelligence Bulletin (JIB)* is intended to highlight the threat of violence from domestic violent extremists (DVEs) in the wake of the 6 January violent breach by some DVEs of the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, following lawful protest activity related to the results of the General Election.<sup>3</sup> Anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists (AGAAVE), specifically militia violent extremists (MVEs);<sup>b,c</sup> racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs);<sup>d</sup> and DVEs citing partisan political grievances will very likely pose the greatest domestic terrorism threats in 2021. In 2021, threats and plotting of illegal activity, including destruction of property and violence targeting officials at all levels of the government, law enforcement, journalists, and infrastructure, as well as sporadic violence surrounding lawful protests, rallies, demonstrations, and other gatherings by DVEs will very likely increase due to renewed measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, socio-political conditions, and perceived government overreach. The FBI, DHS, and NCTC advise federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials, and private sector security partners to remain vigilant in light of the persistent threat posed by DVEs and their unpredictable target selection in order to effectively detect, prevent, preempt, or respond to incidents and terrorist attacks in the United States.



**(U//FOUO) The 6 January 2021 Violent Breach by DVEs of the US Capitol Building Very Likely Will Serve as an Enduring Driver for Violence by a Range of DVEs**

(U//FOUO) The 6 January 2021 violent breach by suspected DVEs into the US Capitol Building very likely will serve as a significant driver of violence for a diverse set of DVEs. Attendance at the lawful protest by ideologically diverse DVEs and others, the subsequent engagement of a sizeable group from that protest in the breach, and the death of an individual directly engaged in the breach very likely will serve to galvanize DVEs and increase collaboration primarily between MVEs and RMVEs, as well as DVEs who adhere to QAnon conspiracy theories.<sup>e,f</sup> These DVEs and others may also perceive the event as a step toward achieving their initiatives, and consider the death of a perceived like-minded individual as an act of martyrdom.<sup>g</sup> Some DVEs' view the 6 January event as a success, in conjunction with the potential to exploit follow-on lawful gatherings and ideological drivers—including conspiracy theories, such as QAnon—likely will also inspire some DVEs and others to engage in more sporadic, lone actor or small cell violence against common DVE targets, including racial, ethnic, or religious minorities and institutions, law enforcement, and government officials and buildings. Criminal activity by rioters targeting members of the media at the breach is also indicative of an increased and prolonged DVE threat of targeted violence against members of the press due to perceived complicity in a system hostile to their beliefs.

**(U) Outlook**

(U//FOUO) The FBI, DHS, and NCTC remain concerned about the potential for a loosely organized, sustained, and significant DVE population mobilizing to violence based on social media calls to target government infrastructure or officials. The shared false narrative of a "stolen" election and opposition to the change in control of the executive and legislative branches of the federal government may lead some individuals to adopt the belief that there is no political solution to address their grievances and violent action is necessary. Additionally, in-person engagement between DVEs of differing ideological goals during the Capitol breach likely served to foster connections, which may increase DVEs' willingness, capability, and motivation to attack and undermine a government they view as illegitimate.<sup>k</sup>

(U//FOUO) In the near term, DVEs could exploit upcoming events to engage in or justify violence, including events attended by MVEs and "boogaloo" adherents scheduled nationally from 16 to 20 January; the 20 January Presidential Inauguration and associated events in Washington, DC; and any departure of the 45th President from office prior to the end of his term. The "boogaloo" is a concept most commonly used by DVEs, particularly MVEs, to reference an impending second civil war or insurgency against the US Government. Calls for revolution may especially resonate with MVEs, who often justify violence based on their belief that they are guardians of the Constitution and the legacies of the American Revolution. While they may not necessarily share the partisan views of those who engaged in the 6 January breach, MVEs and other DVEs who adhere to the "boogaloo" concept and seek a politically motivated civil war, and RMVEs who seek a race war may exploit the aftermath of the Capitol breach by conducting attacks to destabilize and force a climactic conflict in the United States. These factors, and the broad perception among DVEs that the violent breach was successful, may contribute to DVEs' willingness to carry out sporadic, lone actor or small cell violence. Such DVE violence may be targeted against racial, ethnic, and/or religious minorities and associated institutions, journalists, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other targets common among some DVEs.

HEADLINE	01/13 Insider threat on Inauguration Day?
SOURCE	<a href="https://time.com/5929581/security-insider-threat-inauguration/">https://time.com/5929581/security-insider-threat-inauguration/</a>

The deadly siege on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 has prompted U.S. security officials to think the unthinkable as they scramble to secure Washington ahead of next week's Inauguration: that the enemy is already inside the house.

More than a dozen law enforcement officers and current and former military officials are reported to have taken part in the violent Jan. 6 insurrection that killed a U.S. Capitol Police officer and cost four supporters of President Donald Trump their lives. One Navy and two Air Force veterans are among those being investigated by law enforcement for the attack, as is a junior Army officer by her superiors, while several U.S. Capitol Police officers have been suspended after video showed them appearing to assist some of the rioters who were spurred to action by Trump's refusal to accept defeat.

Now the FBI is warning of planned armed protests at the Jan. 20 Inauguration in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals, current senior U.S. officials tell TIME. Current and former security officials say they are concerned that serving U.S. troops or law enforcement officers could pose a clear and present danger to the President- and Vice President-elect and other senior U.S. lawmakers on Inauguration Day. Federal investigators are also trying to track down military and law enforcement members or veterans who took part on Jan. 6, and trace their wider network of associates who may be plotting to turn next week into the mayhem being called for on far-right forums.

But there are too many people to look at, and too little time to do it, says Mitch Silber, former Director of Intelligence Analysis at the New York City Police Department. In Washington alone, up to 20,000 National Guardsmen and hundreds of city, federal and neighboring state police will be on patrol.

"We might be talking one or two bad apples here, not anything systematic," Silber says. Rooting them out would take an internal affairs-style investigation, possibly of entire agencies that are involved in Inauguration security. "We just don't know, and there's just no time to conduct that type of investigation."

The growing sense of urgency and anxiety was reflected in an unprecedented letter from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Mark Milley and all the service chiefs to military members on Tuesday. They wrote that the "violent riot in Washington, D.C." was a "direct assault...on our Constitutional process." The chiefs added that the "rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not give anyone the right to resort to violence, sedition and insurrection."

Their concern is shared by lawmakers who are incensed over the events of Jan. 6 and worried about security preparations underway for Jan. 20. After an FBI briefing on Tuesday, the Democratic chairmen of the Judiciary, Intelligence, Armed Services and Oversight committees released a statement that it's "clear that more must be done to preempt, penetrate, and prevent deadly and seditious assaults by domestic violent extremists in the days ahead."

"There is a crisis issue: the rise of extremism and white supremacy in the ranks," retired Army officer Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.) told Politico on Monday. That rise, he said, has been "fueled by President Trump, unfortunately. So that has to be dealt with right away and unequivocally."

Extremist experts and former law enforcement officials can only guess at how many of the nation's police and military are members of militia or other extremist groups, or even hold extremist views they might be willing to act on. Of the nation's roughly 800,000 police, it's probably far less than one percent, says Mark Pitcavage of the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism. "When you have a body that huge, you're gonna find some people with ties to extremism in it. That's just a given."

Nevertheless, that tiny fraction could still mean a sizable number of trained professionals could have the means and intent to cause serious harm or damage to express their anger over Trump's defeat and the loss of life among rioters at the U.S. Capitol, including military-veteran-turned-martyr Ashli Babbitt. More worryingly, many troops seasoned from fighting terrorists overseas know insurgent tactics, such as communicating via encrypted apps rather than expressing their plots over the now-at-least-temporarily-defunct Parler app, says terrorism expert Mia Bloom of Georgia State University.

“I don’t think it’s hyperbole to say that it’s extremely dangerous when you’re talking about people that have actual training in the military, or in law enforcement,” adds Colin Clarke, head of research for the Soufan Group. In reviewing video clips of the assault on the Capitol, he noticed rioters using specialized military tactics. “People were being commanded to move through a broken window in twos,” he noted, reminiscent of how U.S. troops in Iraq or Afghanistan to enter a building.

Frank Figliuzzi, former FBI Assistant Director for Counterintelligence, has also watched the videos, and says while the “vast majority of those inside the building really have no idea of what they’re doing,” there were a handful of people that seemed “very personal purposeful and seemed to know where to go and what to do, and came equipped with flexi ties and other, and other kinds of tactical gear.”

Some who entered the building wore the militia patch of the Oath Keepers, a group he says brags about having a number of military and law enforcement members in its ranks. “When you have a President who holds campaign rallies called ‘Cops for Trump,’ and they are heavily attended...all of this makes the challenge of securing Washington, securing the inauguration, even more difficult than it already is.”

### **A disappearing target**

Ironically, the Jan. 6 insurrection has handed the FBI the best possible blueprint to find future plotters, giving them legal cause to investigate not just those caught on camera storming the Capitol but associates who cheered them on and say they want to take part in up to four days of further, possibly armed insurrection before and on Inauguration Day. The Justice Department has already opened 170 case files with more on the way, officials said Tuesday.

One problem in their investigation, however, is that many of the would-be anarchists are erasing themselves online, according to Army veteran Jeff Bardin of private intelligence firm Treadstone 71.

Military members have always been careful not to use real identities online, but are becoming even harder to spot in the immediate wake of the Jan. 6 attack, he says. In the last week, he has tracked well-known neo-Nazis and other extremists deleting social media posts and taking their conversations “private” on encrypted apps like Telegram or moving to encrypted app Signal or GAB, a site popular with the alt-right, now that Parler has been taken offline.

“Everybody’s scrubbing their sites and trying to remove things if they participated in the insurrection last week,” Bardin says. “They’re running scared because they know the FBI is coming after them.”

Once the potential bad actors go dark, it’s harder for the FBI to trace their network, as the Constitution’s First Amendment arguably protects a wider universe of dark expression than an Islamic extremist sympathizer would be allowed under existing terrorist laws. The Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable search and seizure by the government, means the FBI can’t run a wiretap on anyone who expresses a belief in, for example, the QAnon conspiracy that claims Trump is the embattled hero who will root out a cabal of cannibalistic child traffickers at the highest ranks of U.S. and global government.

“The FBI cannot open an investigation without a threat of violence or alleged criminal activity,” FBI Washington Field Office Assistant Director in Charge Steven D’Antuono explained Tuesday. “We have to separate the aspirational from the intentional and determine which of the individuals saying despicable things on the internet are just practicing keyboard bravado, or they actually have the intent to do harm.”

### **Marshalling troops**

Separately, the U.S. military is on alert for signs of extremism in its own ranks, spurred in part by a call from Rep. Crow to the Army Secretary after Jan. 6, in which the lawmaker asked him “to ensure that deployed members are not sympathetic to domestic terrorists.” The Army is working with the U.S. Secret Service to “determine which service members supporting the national special security event for the Inauguration require additional background screening,” an Army spokesman tells TIME.



All troops have background checks that are periodically reviewed, and regular training on how to look out for insider threats. Now, the spokesman says, that training is also being given to members of the DC National Guard and other troops arriving to help secure the event.

Military personnel are prohibited from “actively advocating supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes,” says Defense Department spokesman Michael L. Howard, adding that commanders can discipline troops and even expel them for such activity. Howard says the military is piloting a program to monitor members’ social media accounts as part of the routine background investigation process, but that’s been complicated by the use of anonymous avatars and other means of hiding one’s identity, as is often the practice on extremist communication forums.

There’s a long history in this country of both active duty military and veterans becoming radicalized. Timothy McVeigh, a Gulf War Army veteran, conducted the largest domestic terror attack killing 168 people in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Before that, in 1966, Charles Whitman, a former Marine, indiscriminately opened fire atop a tower at the University of Texas at Austin killing 14 people. In 2009, violent Islamic extremist U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan opened fire and killed 13 people at Ft. Hood.

In recent decades, the Anti-Defamation League has helped provide evidence of dozens of white supremacists operating in all branches of the military, according to Congressional testimony by the ADL’s Pitcavage, from connections to the KKK in Texas the 1980s to a former military member taking part in the violent white supremacist protests in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017.

Militia groups like the Oath Keepers draw in members from military and law enforcement ranks by playing on their patriotism and appealing to fears of federal government overreach like threats to gun rights, says Sam Jackson, an expert at the University of Albany in homegrown extremist groups. “Pro-constitutionalist is the way they would paint themselves,” Jackson says. “I call them anti-government extremists.”

The Oath Keepers, founded by former U.S. Army paratrooper Stewart Rhodes, claims to have tens of thousands of current and former military and law enforcement members, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Those with security training are especially sought after to staff what Jackson describes as “an armed neighborhood watch program” that the group has modeled on U.S. special operations teams, with an expert marksman, an explosives expert, a medical expert and communications expert on each team. One of their missions? Armed resistance if the U.S. government tries to impose an assault weapons ban.

Membership to such an extremist group would be clear grounds for dismissal, but it can be harder to eject a soldier who simply expresses fringe, hardline views. Troops can “express their personal opinions on political candidates, make a monetary contribution to a campaign, sign a petition to place a candidate’s name on the ballot, and attend a political event as a spectator,” according to Pentagon legal guidance, but they can’t raise money for, sponsor or speak at a partisan event.

Army Capt. Emily Rainey of the 4th Psychological Operations Group is now being investigated for bringing a group of roughly 100 participants to Washington on Jan. 6 from Ft. Bragg, N.C., according to the Associated Press. She told the AP she was simply acting, as per regulations, as “a private citizen and doing everything right and within my rights.”

### **Policing cops**

As with the military, no one really knows how many cops hold dangerous extremist points of view, but law enforcement officials with ties to white supremacist or far-right groups have been exposed in more than a dozen states since 2000, writes Michael German, a law enforcement and intelligence expert at NYU Law’s Brennan Center for Justice. Many cops have expressed “racist, nativist, and sexist” views on social media, he notes, often with the knowledge of their bosses and only leading to dismissal if the postings spark a controversy.

Many police forces across the country have codes of conduct in place against making racist remarks or joining nationalist militia or white supremacist groups. While joining such a group is not explicitly illegal, the ADL's Pitcavage says that "case law is pretty strong in permitting police departments to fire people involved with extremists causes."

That doesn't necessarily translate into action. Pitcavage says some law enforcement agencies are slow to discipline or eject members aligned with such groups because their leadership is "under the mistaken impression that the person was just engaging in First Amendment activities, and so they could not fire them."

Other radicalized police officers intentionally to hide these activities. "We've known for a while that the extremist right wing has infiltrated into various police departments around the country," says terrorism expert Bloom, who says some violent extremists have even encouraged their children to serve as a way of penetrating U.S. security services. "That was purposeful...and it's been going on for at least 20 years." She believes the decades-long infiltration campaign may have contributed to a spike in "violence against people of color."

It is unclear whether there are any stepped-up measures to watch for insider threats among police assigned to provide security during Inauguration week in Washington. Requests for comment to multiple police organizations were not immediately answered, including to the International Union of Police Associations and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, but the federal officers' group last week roundly condemned the Jan. 6 attack as "an act of anarchy."

Georgetown Law professor and defense lawyer Vida Johnson says a balance needs to be struck between rooting out extremist views fueled by Trump's nativist, anti-immigrant views and demonizing those who are staunch conservatives and might make anti-Biden remarks. "We don't want police" or other branches of law enforcement "to generally be able to surveil people based on...views that we express are non-violent and don't cross any legal lines," she says.

Still, Johnson also says with so many strong Trump supporters in many of the nation's police departments, "it's not a stretch to be worried about this."

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 States scramble: high demand vaccines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#states-across-the-us-scramble-to-meet-the-skyrocketing-demand-for-vaccines">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#states-across-the-us-scramble-to-meet-the-skyrocketing-demand-for-vaccines</a>
GIST	<p>More than 50 million people in the United States who are 65 or older — as well as younger people with underlying conditions — are now cleared to receive a coronavirus vaccine, after the federal government abruptly reversed course on its recommendations on priority groups.</p> <p>But that's much easier said than done, and some experts are questioning whether making so many more people eligible will make the process of signing up and receiving a vaccine even more complicated.</p> <p>"This is creating a lot of confusion and chaos and anxiety days before a new administration comes in," Claire Hannan, executive director of the Association of Immunization Managers, <a href="#">told NPR</a> on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>The challenges are many. States have <a href="#">struggled to set up</a> phone and online sign-up systems, and many of the oldest Americans, who are most at risk of death from a coronavirus infection, <a href="#">have struggled to use them</a>, encountering complicated registration sites, error messages and other roadblocks.</p>

Appointments [have been booked](#) as soon as they open up. Some in the first priority groups have succeeded in booking their shots — but weeks out. Servers [have crashed](#) amid skyrocketing demand. Some areas have [multiple sign-up systems](#), increasing confusion.

In Georgia, a man spoke to Atlanta's [Channel 2 Action News](#) about how he had called the Troup County Covid hotline more than 100 times to try and make an appointment for his mother.

“No one’s ever picking up,” Eric Moore said. “I promise you, I called 134 times.”

There are also questions about how to prioritize people at increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19, an expansive category that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates includes more than 100 million adults with conditions such as obesity, which affects at least 40 percent of adults, diabetes, cancer, and chronic lung and heart disease.

The federal government’s revised guidance, announced by Alex M. Azar II, the secretary of health and human services, [at a news conference on Tuesday](#), is not binding. As with testing and tracing earlier in the pandemic, each state has been left to devise its own plan based on local needs, at times creating confusion and scattershot approaches.

In New York, which had only expanded eligibility statewide [to include residents 75 and older and more essential workers on Monday](#), there was concern about the crush of demand outpacing availability. Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City acknowledged on Wednesday that people may be frustrated by trying to make appointments online or on the phone.

As eligibility continued to expand, he said the city would keep administering doses over the next few weeks “and then we’re going to run out of the vaccine.” The city usually receives about 100,000 doses per week, the city’s health commissioner said Tuesday at a City Council hearing to address problems with the rollout. But officials don’t find out until a couple of days beforehand.

“Even with normal supplies that we expect to have delivered next week, we will run out of vaccine at some point next week unless we get a major new resupply,” the mayor said Wednesday.

The federal government has delivered about 27.7 million doses to states, territories and federal agencies as of Tuesday, and [about 9.3 million doses had been administered](#) as of Tuesday. The Trump administration originally said that 20 million Americans would be vaccinated by Jan. 1.

West Virginia, South Dakota and North Dakota had administered the most first doses per capita among states, and Arkansas had administered the fewest, federal data shows.

Mr. Azar said on Tuesday that the country was “on track” to reach the rate of one million vaccinations a day in about a week, and stressed that data collection about each states’ progress has been slow and faulty.

He also faulted states that had been “overly prescriptive and trying to micromanage every single dose of vaccine” and said the government [would send more doses to states](#) based on their success in distributing ones they had already received.

The allocation will also be based on the size of a state’s population of people 65 and older, not on its general adult population, he said. It was unclear, however, whether that would hold past Jan. 20, when President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. takes office.

	Mr. Biden is expected to announce details of his own vaccination plan — which will include federally supported mass vaccination clinics — on Thursday. Mr. Biden has set a goal of 100 million shots administered in his first 100 days.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Capitol siege overshadows virus death toll</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#the-fallout-from-the-capitol-siege-has-overshadowed-the-surging-us-virus-death-toll">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#the-fallout-from-the-capitol-siege-has-overshadowed-the-surging-us-virus-death-toll</a>
GIST	<p>As America slogs through this grimmest of winters, there is no relief in the daily tabulations of coronavirus-related deaths: More than 4,400 were reported across the United States on Tuesday, <a href="#">according to a New York Times database</a>, a number once unimaginable.</p> <p>Yet even as Covid-19 touches thousands of families, the nation is distracted by the political crisis gripping Washington in the last days of the Trump administration.</p> <p>Tuesday's death count, which set another daily record, represented at least 1,597 more people than those killed in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.</p> <p>The U.S. death toll, already the world's highest by a <a href="#">wide margin</a>, is now about 20,000 shy of 400,000 — only a month after the country <a href="#">crossed the 300,000 threshold</a>, a figure greater than the number of Americans who died fighting in World War II.</p> <p>But much of the nation's attention is focused on the fallout from the <a href="#">Capitol siege</a>, prompted in part by President Trump's efforts to prevent Congress from certifying Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s victory in the November election.</p> <p>On Wednesday, <a href="#">the House will vote to formally charge Mr. Trump</a> with inciting violence against the country. House lawmakers have formally notified Vice President Mike Pence that they will impeach the president if Mr. Pence and the cabinet do not remove Mr. Trump from power by invoking the 25th Amendment.</p> <p>As people in the country wait to see how Mr. Trump's tenure will end, they have also focused on the stories of the <a href="#">five people who were left dead after last week's rampage</a> — in particular, the death of <a href="#">Brian D. Sicknick</a>, a Capitol Police officer who was overpowered by the mob and struck on the head with a fire extinguisher.</p> <p>"Brian is a hero," his brother Ken Sicknick said. "That is what we would like people to remember."</p> <p>Each coronavirus death is no less painful to the families and friends who have lost loved ones. Among the latest victims are a revered <a href="#">basketball coach</a>, a <a href="#">travel writer</a> who loved country winters and an <a href="#">architect</a> who had survived the Holocaust.</p> <p>The health Secretary Alex M. Azar II tried to highlight the urgency of the crisis on Tuesday as the Trump administration said <a href="#">that it would release all available vaccine doses and instructed states</a> to immediately begin inoculating every American 65 and older.</p> <p>"This next phase reflects the urgency of the situation we face," he said. "Every vaccine dose that is sitting in a warehouse rather than going into an arm could mean one more life lost or one more hospital bed occupied."</p>

HEADLINE	<b>01/13 China places 22M under lockdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#facing-new-outbreaks-china-puts-more-than-22-million-under-lockdown">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#facing-new-outbreaks-china-puts-more-than-22-million-under-lockdown</a>
GIST	<p>When a handful of new coronavirus cases materialized this month in a province surrounding Beijing — apparently spread at a village wedding party — the Chinese authorities bolted into action.</p> <p>They locked down two cities with more than 17 million people, Shijiazhuang and Xingtai. They ordered a testing regime of nearly every resident there, which was completed in a matter of days.</p> <p>They shut down transportation and canceled weddings, funerals and, most significantly, a provincial Communist Party conference.</p> <p>By this week, the lockdowns had expanded to include another city on the edge of Beijing, Langfang, as well as a county in Heilongjiang, a northeastern province. Districts in Beijing itself, the Chinese capital, also shut down.</p> <p><a href="#">More than 22 million people in all have been ordered</a> to remain inside their homes — double the number affected last January when China’s central government locked down Wuhan, the central city where the virus was first reported, in a move that was then <a href="#">seen as extraordinary</a>.</p> <p>The flare-ups remain small compared with the devastation facing other countries, but still threaten to undercut the success that the country’s Communist Party has had in subduing the virus, allowing <a href="#">its economy</a> to surge back after last year’s slump and its people to return to something close to <a href="#">normal lives</a>.</p> <p>The urgency of the government’s current response stands in contrast to that of officials in Wuhan last year who <a href="#">feared a backlash</a> if they disclosed the mysterious new illnesses then emerging. Local officials there had gone ahead with a Communist Party conference like the one now canceled in Hebei, despite knowing the risk of the disease spreading among people.</p> <p>Since Wuhan, the authorities have <a href="#">created a playbook</a> that mobilizes party cadres to quickly respond to new outbreaks by sealing off neighborhoods, conducting widespread testing and quarantining large groups.</p> <p>China, a country of 1.4 billion people, has reported an average of 109 new cases a day over the past week, according to a <a href="#">New York Times database</a>. Those would be welcome numbers in countries experiencing far worse — including the United States, which is averaging more than 250,000 new cases a day — but they are the worst in China since last summer.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Oklahoma grapples w/surge in virus cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#oklahoma-with-no-statewide-mask-mandate-grapples-with-a-surging-caseload">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/13/world/covid19-coronavirus#oklahoma-with-no-statewide-mask-mandate-grapples-with-a-surging-caseload</a>
GIST	Oklahoma is in the grip of a frightening surge of the coronavirus, the worst it has yet seen and one of the worst in America’s winter.

Mercy Hospital Ardmore, in rural Oklahoma, has so many Covid-19 patients that some people are being cared for in curtained-off areas of hallways and the emergency department's waiting room.

It has been this way for weeks.

"The people coming in are very, very sick, and they don't quickly get better," said Paula Pfau, the hospital's nursing director.

Oklahoma is averaging nearly 4,000 new cases each day, an increase of almost 50 percent from two weeks ago. Rural counties in the southern part of the state, including around Ardmore, are now among the hardest hit in the country relative to their populations.

Family gatherings and parties over the holidays are at least partly to blame, according to hospital officials and the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

Nationally, the country is facing its worst days of the pandemic: There were over 4,400 Covid-19 deaths reported in the United States on Tuesday, a record, according to a New York Times database. Hospitalizations are at a near-record high of 131,326, according to the Covid Tracking Project. And more than 380,000 people in the United States have died from Covid-19.

Oklahoma is experiencing the third worst outbreak in the country, behind Arizona, which is enduring a surge even worse than its summer peak, and California, where a weekslong flood of cases is wearing hospitals and their workers thin.

There is no statewide mask mandate in Oklahoma, although the city of Ardmore has had one since November.

A crush of new Covid-19 patients emerged seven to 10 days after Thanksgiving, and another after Christmas and New Year's Eve.

"In rural Oklahoma, we didn't get our first case for a long time," Ms. Pfau said. "We kind of decided the surge couldn't happen here. We don't have public transportation. We don't have Uber. We're in the middle of the country, with all this space. So we kept on with business as usual. And now it's just a full-force hit."

Coronavirus cases were relatively low in Oklahoma until the summer, when the daily number of new cases spiked in June, then surpassed 1,000 each day in September.

An indoor rally in July held by President Trump in Tulsa was linked to a spike in cases there by the director of the Tulsa Health Department, Dr. Bruce Dart, who had pleaded with attendees to wear face masks, which were not worn by most at Mr. Trump's rally.

Now, pretty much everyone in the state knows someone who has been sick, said Dr. Jennifer Clark, a physician and former hospital administrator who is helping lead an effort by Oklahoma State University to keep rural health care providers updated on the pandemic.

"There's a heavy sense of grief," she said.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-economy-powers-ahead-while-the-rest-of-the-world-reels-11610552422?mod=hp_lead_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-economy-powers-ahead-while-the-rest-of-the-world-reels-11610552422?mod=hp_lead_pos5</a>
GIST	<p>China ended the Year of Covid in many ways stronger than it started, accelerating its movement toward the center of a global economy long dominated by the U.S.</p> <p>While the U.S. and Europe wait for vaccine rollouts to get fully back on track, <a href="#">China is the only major economy expected to report growth</a> for 2020, helping it close the gap with the U.S.</p> <p>It has expanded its role in global trade and shored up its position as the world's factory floor, despite years of U.S. efforts to persuade companies to invest elsewhere. China's consumer market—lifted by its quick recovery from Covid-19—keeps gaining momentum, making it a <a href="#">bigger driver of global companies' earnings</a>.</p> <p>And the country has solidified its standing as a <a href="#">force in global financial markets</a>, with a record share of initial public offerings and secondary listings in 2020, large capital inflows into stocks and bonds, and indexes that far outperformed even the U.S.'s strong showing.</p> <p>The upshot is a world more reliant on <a href="#">China for growth</a> than ever before. For 2020, China's economy is expected to account for 16.8% of global gross domestic product, adjusted for inflation, according to forecasts by Moody's Analytics. That's up from 14.2% in 2016, before the U.S. and China entered a trade war. The U.S. is expected to make up 22.2%, virtually unchanged from 22.3% in 2016.</p> <p>China's 2020 increase in its share of global GDP—1.1 percentage points—is its largest in a single year since at least the 1970s.</p> <p>The country is scheduled to report fourth-quarter and annual growth on Jan. 18, a moment that's likely to confirm its ascendancy.</p> <p>The gains are a testament to China's success in containing Covid-19 and getting its businesses humming again. The country's stimulus programs, which were smaller as a portion of the overall economy than in the U.S., focused on restoring factory production and keeping small businesses from going bust, with relatively little direct support for consumers.</p> <p>That strategy paid off when, unusually in a recession, U.S. consumers kept spending heavily. Chinese factories were ready to serve them. That helped support Chinese jobs and China's own consumer spending through the rest of the year.</p> <p>China also benefited because it is <a href="#">hard for foreign manufacturing firms to relocate</a>, even after pandemic disruptions left many executives wanting to diversify their supply chains. Companies have to weigh losing the network effect of having so many other suppliers nearby, as well as the risks of moving elsewhere after China has proved so reliable.</p> <p>A November survey by <a href="#">HSBC Holdings</a> PLC of more than 1,100 global corporations found that 75%, including 70% of U.S. companies, expect to increase their supply-chain footprint in China over the next two years.</p> <p><b>Trade tensions</b></p> <p>For the rest of the world, China's success is a double-edged sword. Chinese demand has been a godsend for businesses that sell to China, including commodity producers as well as auto makers and luxury-goods companies that lost sales elsewhere.</p>



China's renewed strength has also left businesses more exposed to a country whose leaders have made clear they want to reduce China's reliance on foreign companies in favor of building up more of its own corporations.

In Australia, nearly 42% of the country's goods exports went to mainland China in October, near the all-time monthly high from earlier in the year, before slipping to 37% in November, according to Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

While Chinese buying of Australian iron ore has helped cushion the Pacific nation's economy, which experienced its first recession in 29 years, it has also added uneasiness—especially when China imposed restrictions on imports of Australian beef, barley and wine after Canberra pushed for more scrutiny of Covid-19's origins.

“Have we become too reliant on China? The answer is clearly yes,” said Saul Eslake, a former chief economist at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd.

In the U.S., the Trump administration's tariffs on China were meant to address imbalances in the global economy and level the playing field between the two countries.

Instead, China is expected for 2020 to record the biggest surplus in its current account—the broadest measure of a country's transactions with the rest of the world—in history for any country, according to Capital Economics, a research firm.

Still, measured as a percentage of world GDP, China's account surplus was even bigger in 2007 and 2008.

China continues to face some big economic challenges, including an aging population and rising labor costs, which make manufacturing more expensive. A recent rash of credit defaults by state-owned enterprises has added to longstanding worries over debt. And its momentum in manufacturing could ebb this year, if other parts of the global economy begin firing on all cylinders again.

Some economists say the country's state-led economic model has blunted private-sector innovation that is potentially vital to China's future.

Since Covid-19 emerged, however, China's economy has been resilient, bolstering Beijing leaders' belief that their system offers a more dependable alternative to Western democratic capitalism, especially during times of crisis.

The U.S. remains the world's No. 1 economy, with the largest consumer market, a much higher standard of living and a currency whose importance dwarfs that of the Chinese yuan. America's GDP is 50% greater than China's.

The U.S. is also grappling with extreme political stress. This year, it is expected to grow around 3%-4%, but its economy likely won't get back to its 2019 size until the second half of the year, according to some economists' forecasts.

China is expected to grow as much as 9% this year, according to Morgan Stanley estimates.

“China will always remain our main market,” said Chung Yong-soo, director of the global business management division at South Korean snack maker Orion Corp. , best known for a marshmallow-filled treat called “Choco Pie.”

The company launched a tie-up with PepsiCo Inc. in the 1980s to bring new products it could sell in the South Korean market. Increasingly, though, selling its products in China is what matters most to its bottom line.

Orion’s operating profits in China jumped 28% in the first three quarters of last year compared with the same period a year earlier, thanks to the introduction of new products into the market, including glutinous rice cake-inspired Choco Pies. China sales accounted for 48.2% of Orion’s overall revenue in 2019, compared with 38.7% in 2010.

### **Factories restarted**

For years, economists warned that China’s rising labor costs, deepening debt and ebbing productivity gains would imperil its status as the world’s factory floor. The trade war and higher tariffs further cut into China’s advantages.

But China’s share in global exports of goods is still growing. It was 15.4% in November, the most recent month for which data was available, compared with 13.7% late 2019, before the pandemic came into full swing, according to Oxford Economics.

The gain was driven in part by China’s quick pivot to sell personal protective equipment, such as masks and respirators, whose sales have surged during the pandemic.

Beijing forcefully intervened to contain Covid-19 and help keep factories and businesses open. It sealed off large parts of the country and barred people from leaving their homes for extended periods, moves that would be difficult in countries with more freedoms.

About 4,600 people have died in China as a result of the pandemic, according to the country’s health ministry, although that number is thought to be underreported by some researchers. In the U.S., the death toll is close to 380,000.

It ordered state-owned banks to halt debt collection on affected businesses and individuals while offering fresh credit to small firms at cheaper-than-usual rates. Local officials required factory owners to meet tough standards to ensure safe operations, including, in some cases, tracking workers’ connections to affected regions.

Many local governments, including the city of Foshan, dispatched shuttle buses to bring migrant workers stranded in villages back to factories once the virus was gone. Larger manufacturers, such as Foxconn Technology Group, which assembles Apple Inc. products in China, offered workers bonuses up to \$430 per person to come back to work.

Chen Xin, co-founder and general manager of Foshan Nuobio Electrical Appliance Co., said he personally worked on his company’s assembly line along with two partners and their wives to ensure orders for air purifiers were met during the pandemic. Local authorities made sure the factory passed inspections before reopening, the 37-year-old Mr. Chen said.

By mid-March, nearly all of Nuobio’s roughly 50 suppliers had resumed production, he said. All are located within 50 kilometers of the factory. “That’s the biggest advantage that China offers. Nowhere else can you find such a comprehensive and close-knit supply-chain network,” Mr. Chen said.

With consumers in the West spending more time at home, orders from overseas surged, and Nuobio benefited. The company's sales rose about 20% in 2020.

By early April, more than 97% of China's larger enterprises had reopened, according to Zhang Weihua, an official with China's National Bureau of Statistics.

Other companies, including consumer electronics manufacturers, saw stronger-than-usual export orders. In November, China's exports grew at their fastest pace in nearly three years, resulting in a record trade surplus of \$75 billion that month. It dipped a bit in December.

Some buyers of Chinese goods weren't eager to resume sourcing there, worried they had become too dependent. But they found other alternatives weren't as good.

In Australia, Conga Foods recently launched a line of locally made vinegars to reduce imports from Europe and tap into growing consumer demand for domestically made products. The company needs glass bottles for the vinegar from China because no suitable bottles are made in Australia, said David Valmorbida, director at the company.

"If we would have a reliable production source in Australia of the required bottles that are priced competitively, then we would definitely prefer to buy that locally," Mr. Valmorbida said.

Kleva Health, a San Francisco-based startup that sells at-home Covid-19 testing kits, needed large numbers of saliva collection tubes last summer.

David Yu, the company's 31-year-old founder, said he initially decided to go with tubes made in Canada but abandoned the plan after finding that ones made in southeastern China were less expensive and more accurate.

The company is awaiting approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to sell the testing products to average Americans.

### **Expanding consumer market**

Consumer spending in China bounced back by the fall. China's personal luxury-goods market is expected to have grown 7.6% in 2020, even as the global market contracted 20%, according to research firm Euromonitor International.

"While the rest of the world has stopped spending, the Chinese have carried on," said Fflur Roberts, Euromonitor's head of luxury-goods research.

While foreign direct investment, such as by businesses for production assets abroad, into the U.S. and Europe plummeted in the first half of this year, it largely held steady in China, where it was up 6.3% through November, compared with the previous year's 11 months, according to China's commerce ministry.

Money has flowed into China in other ways, adding momentum to its long-term goal of building up important domestic financial centers. Chinese markets, including in Hong Kong, accounted for 43% of the world's public listings last year, according to data from Refinitiv.

Foreign holdings of Chinese bonds hit a record 3.25 trillion yuan, or about \$503 billion, in December, up 49% in a year, according to data compiled by Bond Connect Co.

	The MSCI China index, which includes Chinese companies listed at home as well as those that trade in New York or other locations, rose 27% in dollar terms last year. The MSCI AC World index is up 14% in the same period, and MSCI's U.S. benchmark added 19%.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Impeached--again: inciting insurrection</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/trump-impeached.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/trump-impeached.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Donald J. Trump on Wednesday became the first American president to be impeached twice, as 10 members of his party joined with Democrats in the House to charge him with “incitement of insurrection” for his role in egging on a violent mob that stormed the Capitol last week.</p> <p>Reconvening in a building now heavily militarized against threats from pro-Trump activists and adorned with bunting for the inauguration of President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr., lawmakers voted 232 to 197 to approve a single impeachment article. It accused Mr. Trump of “inciting violence against the government of the United States” in his quest to overturn the election results, and called for him to be removed and disqualified from ever holding public office again.</p> <p>The vote left another indelible stain on Mr. Trump’s presidency just a week before he is slated to leave office and laid bare the cracks running through the Republican Party. More members of his party voted to charge the president than in any other impeachment.</p> <p>Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California, declaring the past week one of the darkest chapters in American history, implored colleagues to embrace “a constitutional remedy that will ensure that the republic will be safe from this man who is so resolutely determined to tear down the things that we hold dear and that hold us together.”</p> <p>A little more than a year after she led a painstaking, three-month process to impeach Mr. Trump the first time for a pressure campaign on Ukraine to incriminate Mr. Biden — a case rejected by the president’s unfailingly loyal Republican supporters — Ms. Pelosi had moved this time with little fanfare to do the same job in only seven days.</p> <p>“He must go. He is a clear and present danger to the nation that we all love,” the speaker said, adding later, “It gives me no pleasure to say this — it breaks my heart.”</p> <p>The top House Republican, Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, conceded in a pained speech on the floor that Mr. Trump had been to blame for the deadly assault at the Capitol. It had forced the vice president and lawmakers who had gathered there to formalize Mr. Biden’s victory to flee for their lives.</p> <p>“The president bears responsibility for Wednesday’s attack on Congress by mob rioters,” said Mr. McCarthy, one of the 138 Republicans who returned to the House floor after the mayhem and voted to reject certified electoral votes for Mr. Biden. “He should have immediately denounced the mob when he saw what was unfolding.”</p> <p>Outside the House chamber, a surreal tableau offered reminders of the rampage that gave rise to the impeachment, as thousands of armed members of the National Guard in camouflage fatigues surrounded the complex and snaked through its halls, stacking their helmets, backpacks and weapons wherever they went. Their presence gave the proceedings a wartime feel, and evoked images of the 1860s, when the Union Army had quartered in the building.</p>

A week of trauma and deliberation left lawmakers sparring not just over impeachment, but also over facial coverings mandated because of the coronavirus and newly installed metal detectors outside the House chamber meant to stop lawmakers from bringing guns onto the floor. Some Republicans darted past the machines without stopping, setting the alarms wailing. Several Democrats said they had concerns — so far unsubstantiated — that far-right colleagues might have played a role in facilitating the attack, and they [requested an investigation](#).

Dozens of others stayed away from the Capitol on the momentous day, fearful of exposing colleagues or themselves to the virus and of lingering security threats, instead casting their votes remotely by proxy.

The House's action set the stage for the second Senate trial of the president in a year. The precise timing of that proceeding remained in doubt, though, as senators appeared unlikely to convene to sit in judgment before Jan. 20, when Mr. Biden will take the oath of office and Mr. Trump will become a former president.

The last proceeding was a partisan affair. But this time, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, was [said to support the effort](#) as a means of purging his party of Mr. Trump, setting up a political and constitutional showdown that could shape the course of American politics.

If a Senate trial resulted in Mr. Trump's conviction, it held out the prospect, tantalizing for Democrats and many Republicans alike, of barring him from ever holding office again.

In a measured statement after the vote, Mr. Biden called for the nation to come together after an "unprecedented assault on our democracy." He was staring down the likelihood that the trial would complicate his first days in office, and said he hoped Senate leadership would "find a way to deal with their constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation." That work included cabinet nominations and confronting the coronavirus crisis.

In the House, Democrats and Republicans who supported his ouster made no attempt to hide their fury at Mr. Trump, who was said to have enjoyed watching the attack play out on television as lawmakers pleaded for help. Republicans harangued members of their own party for supporting his mendacious campaign to claim election victory.

Returning to the same chamber where many of them donned gas masks and hid under chairs amid gunfire one week ago — as rioters carrying zip ties and chanting "hang Pence" and "where's Nancy" overtook the police — lawmakers issued stinging indictments of the president and his party.

"They may have been hunting for Pence and Pelosi to stage their coup," said Representative Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the lead impeachment prosecutor, "but every one of us in this room right now could have died."

At least five people did die during the attack, including an officer and a member of the mob who was shot just outside the chamber door.

Lawmakers said the threat from Mr. Trump had not subsided.

"He is capable of starting a civil war," said Representative Maxine Waters of California, a veteran liberal.

After four years of nearly unquestioning alliance with him, few Republicans defended Mr. Trump's actions outright. Those who did resorted to a familiar set of false equivalencies, pointing to racial justice protests last summer that turned violent and accusations that Democrats had mistreated the president and were trying to stifle the [74 million Americans who voted for him](#).

"It's always been about getting the president, no matter what," Representative Jim Jordan, Republican of Ohio, shot across the room at Democrats. "It's an obsession — an obsession that has now broadened. It's not just about impeachment anymore, it's about canceling, as I've said. Canceling the president and anyone that disagrees with them."

Overhanging the proceedings was the [deadly coronavirus pandemic](#), which is killing more than 3,000 Americans a day. A handful of lawmakers were infected after the chaotic evacuation of the Capitol, as many Republicans had refused to wear masks in the secure rooms where lawmakers in both parties had huddled for safety.

Far from contrite, Mr. Trump insisted in the run-up to the vote that his words to loyalists swarming Washington last week had been appropriate. In the days since, he has repeated bogus lies that the election was stolen from him. He also denounced impeachment as part of the yearslong "witch hunt" against him, but had taken no apparent steps to put together a legal team to defend him when he stands trial.

Not long after the vote on Wednesday, Mr. Trump [released a video condemning the violence](#) and urging his followers to avoid a repeat in "the coming days both here in Washington and across the country" as federal authorities warned of a nationwide wave of violence surrounding Mr. Biden's inauguration. But the president did not mention his own role in instigating the violence or apologize, nor did he concede or mention Mr. Biden's name.

Mr. Trump recorded the video under pressure from aides, who have warned him that he faces potential legal exposure for the riot, which took place after a [speech](#) in which he urged supporters to "fight" the election results.

It also came after Mr. McConnell had released a note to Republican senators in which he did not deny that he backed the impeachment push. The leader said that he had "not made a final decision on how I will vote, and I intend to listen to the legal arguments when they are presented to the Senate."

Mr. McConnell also issued a separate statement in which he rejected a plea by Democrats to begin the proceeding immediately. After the House vote, he said there was "simply no chance that a fair or serious trial could conclude" before the inauguration.

"I believe it will best serve our nation if Congress and the executive branch spend the next seven days completely focused on facilitating a safe inauguration and an orderly transfer of power to the incoming Biden administration," Mr. McConnell said.

The statement did not mention the merits of the case, but privately, the Senate Republican leader was seething at Mr. Trump — whom he has sworn he will not speak to again — and is said to believe the president committed impeachable offenses. It would most likely take 17 Republicans joining Democrats to convict Mr. Trump, an exceedingly high bar.

Mr. McConnell's anger was shared by some Republicans in the House, most prominently Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the chairwoman of the House Republican Conference and scion of a storied political family.

The other Republicans who voted to impeach Mr. Trump were Representatives Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington, John Katko of New York, Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, Fred Upton of Michigan, Dan Newhouse of Washington, Peter Meijer of Michigan, Anthony Gonzalez of Ohio, David Valadao of California and Tom Rice of South Carolina. Together, they issued some of the sharpest condemnations of the president, defying the prevailing view of their party.

"I'm not afraid of losing my job, but I am afraid that my country will fail," Ms. Herrera Beutler said. "I'm afraid patriots to this country have died in vain. I'm afraid my children won't grow up in a free country. I'm afraid injustice will prevail."

Mr. Rice, who represents a safely Republican seat, said that he had "backed this president through thick and thin for four years."

A dozen or so other Republicans indicated they might have supported impeachment if Mr. Trump were not on the brink of leaving office or if Democrats had slowed the process down.

Mr. McCarthy, who had privately mused about calling on Mr. Trump to resign after years of eagerly defending him, spoke out against a "snap impeachment," warning that it would "further fan the flames of partisan division." But he also batted down false suggestions from some of his colleagues that Antifa had actually been responsible for the siege, not supporters of Mr. Trump.

Mr. McCarthy proposed censuring the president instead of impeaching him.

But there were strong signs of support for Mr. Trump as well, despite the fact that he has lost his party the House, the Senate and the White House in the course of two years. Far-right Republicans immediately started a campaign to oust Ms. Cheney from her leadership post, which she said she would not relinquish.

While Ms. Cheney had released a statement on Tuesday announcing her intention to impeach Mr. Trump and denouncing him in scathing terms, she chose not to speak during the impeachment debate on Wednesday. Democrat after Democrat quoted her anyway — despite the party's longstanding antipathy for Ms. Cheney and her father, Dick Cheney, the former vice president — effectively arguing that her backing signified a broad consensus that the president must go.

"As Liz Cheney was saying, there has never been a greater betrayal by a president of the United States of his office and his oath to the Constitution. Don't dismiss that," said Representative Steny H. Hoyer, Democrat of Maryland and the majority leader. "As she has taken a stand, I hope others will as well."

The vote came a little more than a year after the House impeached Mr. Trump for trying to use the levers of power to pressure the leader of Ukraine into smearing Mr. Biden, then his leading rival for the looming 2020 election. Republicans unanimously opposed the charges then, but the themes at the center of the impeachment and subsequent trial were ultimately the same on Wednesday: Mr. Trump's willingness to put himself above the nation he swore an oath to lead and abuse his power in pursuit of retaining it.



	<p>The House’s case was narrow, laid out in a four-page impeachment article that charged the president “threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power, and imperiled a coequal branch of government.”</p> <p>Specifically, it said he sowed false claims about election fraud, pressured Georgia election officials to “find” him enough votes to overturn the results and then encouraged a crowd of his most loyal supporters to gather in Washington and confront Congress.</p> <p>The article referred to the 14th Amendment, passed after the Civil War, which prohibits any officeholder involved in “insurrection or rebellion” from holding official office. It also quoted Mr. Trump’s own words at the rally a week ago, when he told supporters, “If you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.”</p> <p>This time, there were no witness interviews, no hearings, no committee debates and no real additional fact finding beyond the public record and the plain facts of the brutal attack and Mr. Trump’s words.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 National Guard in every corner of Capitol</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/inside-capitol-impeachment.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/inside-capitol-impeachment.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — They slept on the marble floors, lined up for coffee in the 24-hour snack bar and marveled at the marble likenesses of the nation’s founders in the Rotunda and Statuary Hall. They snapped photos with their phones, ate pizza and sometimes played cards, their M4 carbines at their sides.</p> <p>Throngs of armed, camouflage fatigue-clad members of the National Guard ringed the Capitol and lined its halls on Wednesday, weapons, helmets and backpacks stacked seemingly in every corner of the complex. The heavily militarized presence provided a jarring and sobering backdrop to the House chamber as a majority of lawmakers <a href="#">moved to impeach a sitting American president</a> for inciting an insurrection on the nation’s Capitol.</p> <p>It evoked reminders of the rioters who just one week earlier had <a href="#">stormed the complex</a> as its terrified occupants took shelter inside the barricaded House chamber and secure locations across the Capitol — and the recriminations that remained before President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s inauguration.</p> <p>“It doesn’t belong here,” Representative Elaine Luria, Democrat of Virginia and a veteran who served 20 years in the Navy, said of the military presence in the building. “It is something that is out of place.”</p> <p>“I hate the idea that we’re going to change in a way, be harder more difficult or more cumbersome for people to come enjoy the historic monument that this is because of what happened last week,” she added.</p> <p>Much like the lawmakers, aides and reporters who were still <a href="#">exchanging accounts</a> of where they were during the siege of Trump supporters, Capitol Hill on Wednesday appeared to be torn between nursing the open wounds left by deadly riots and the need to lay the groundwork for healing under a new administration.</p>

Capitol workers feverishly worked in recent days to complete preparations for the inauguration on Jan. 20 — hanging blue curtains over the entrance to the Rotunda and brushing dust off the statues — among reminders of the violence. Window panes remained splintered and cracked in parts of the Capitol and two holes were left over the entry to the office of Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California after rioters stole her embossed wood plaque.

Freshman lawmakers delivered their maiden floor speeches on the merits of charging President Trump with [high crimes and misdemeanors for inciting an insurrection](#). After a majority of the House voted to impeach Mr. Trump, Ms. Pelosi spoke from the same lectern that a Trump loyalist [had been photographed gleefully hauling](#) across the Capitol.

“I don’t have enough adjectives to describe how disgusted I am with what happened and the point that we’re at — it’s sad, it’s disgusting, it’s sad,” said Representative Brian Mast, Republican of Florida. An Army veteran who lost his legs while serving in Afghanistan, he gave tours of the Rotunda to members of the Guard as a way of showing gratitude for their service. (Mr. Mast also voted to overturn the results in both Arizona and Pennsylvania, and expressed no regret about those votes. He was not among the [10 Republicans who voted](#) to impeach Mr. Trump.)

Some lawmakers lamented the threat that made the military’s presence necessary, with many Democrats irate about the role they said their own Republican colleagues had played in whipping up the rage of the mob that assaulted the Capitol, putting lawmakers’ lives in danger.

“It should not and will not be tolerated,” Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York, told reporters. “And that’s why extraordinary security measures have been taken.”

In response in part to concerns about Republicans bringing guns to the House floor, new magnetometers have been installed outside the doors to the chamber, a security measure that was challenging for several lawmakers. Typically allowed to bypass the magnetometers at the entrances to the building, several Republicans grumbled about the added layer of security and some made a point of pushing past police officers despite setting off the alarm.

“You’re taking valuable resources completely away from where it needs to be without any consultation, and you guys did it without any consultation from the minority,” Representative Rodney Davis of Illinois, the top Republican on the House Administration Committee, seethed on Tuesday to Representative Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland, the majority leader. With multiple people testing positive for the coronavirus after sheltering in a room with maskless Republicans, Democrats also enforced a fine system for refusing to wear a mask on the chamber floor.

The magnetometers and heightened security were a small comfort during the vote to impeach Mr. Trump given that several lawmakers were still shaken and questioning the ability to attend inauguration safely. On Wednesday, Ms. Pelosi said that the House would vote this month on a rule change that would enforce a fine system for refusing to adhere to the new security protocols, deducting \$5,000 and \$10,000 from member pay for the first and second offenses.

“What we’re dealing with now is combating an insurrection, so I feel like everything upside down,” said Representative Colin Allred, Democrat of Texas, who recalled whipping off his jacket on the House floor and preparing to defend his colleagues against the rioters. “To see National Guardsmen sleeping in the halls, to have the necessary protection of having metal detectors put up to go onto the House floor — I know the word ‘unprecedented’ is used a lot, but this is unprecedented. And it’s also so sad, just so sad.”

“It’s intended to be open,” Mr. Allred added of the Capitol. “It’s a museum, it’s a place where ordinary Americans should feel like they can come and watch the government work.”

But while it houses both artifacts of American history and the holders of the highest offices of American democracy, the Capitol complex is in ordinary times an accessible fortress. But with tourists barred as a way to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the presence of hundreds of armed troops was even more disconcerting after months of near-empty hallways.

Several of the soldiers craning their necks to look at the paintings and sculptures etched into the ceiling of the Rotunda said they had never been to the Capitol, even as tourists. Their colleagues in another room could be seen dozing next to a plaque commemorating troops who were quartered in the Capitol in 1861, in Statuary Hall, and a small group posed for a photo with the statue of Rosa Parks.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Ohio researchers: new strain Covid-19
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-strain-found-ohio/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-strain-found-ohio/</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. has again hit a record high for coronavirus deaths. More than 4,300 Americans died from the virus on Tuesday. While the pace of vaccinations is picking up, with <a href="#">nearly 1 million shots</a> delivered Tuesday, a possible new coronavirus strain has appeared in Ohio.</p> <p>Researchers at Ohio State University <a href="#">discovered a new variant</a> that carries a mutation identical to the strain found in the U.K., but was likely already present in the U.S. The <a href="#">dangerous strain from the U.K.</a> has been detected in 11 states.</p> <p>Researchers said they also found another U.S. strain with three other gene mutations that were not previously seen. The strain with three new mutations was more prominent in Columbus in recent weeks, they said.</p> <p>"Also, like the U.K. strain, the mutations in the Columbus strain are likely to make the virus more infectious, making it easier for the virus to pass from person to person," the university said in a news release on Wednesday.</p> <p>Peter Mohler, a co-author of the study, said there is no evidence showing that the coronavirus vaccines will be less effective against the new mutations.</p> <p>"At this point, we have no data to believe that these mutations will have any impact on the effectiveness of vaccines now in use," Mohler said.</p> <p>Arizona leads the nation in per capita COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. The home of the Arizona Cardinals, State Farm Stadium in Glendale, is now a mass vaccination site for health care workers, first responders, teachers and child care workers.</p> <p>The Arizona Department of Health Services is prepared to give at least 600 shots a day and the stadium will be open around the clock for at least the next two months.</p> <p>The race to vaccinate is taking on added urgency with California having more than 30,000 deaths attributed to the coronavirus.</p> <p>"In my 34 years, I never thought I would see anything like this," said Ken McKenzie, who runs a funeral home in Southern California. This time last year "there would probably be two or three people that I'd be caring for," he said. "Right now, there's probably 40 or 50 embalmed bodies here with families waiting to have closure."</p>

HEADLINE	01/13 Authorities tracking threats; 'week of siege'
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/authorities-tracking-multiple-threats-week-siege-capitol-breach/story?id=75232824">https://abcnews.go.com/US/authorities-tracking-multiple-threats-week-siege-capitol-breach/story?id=75232824</a>
GIST	<p>ABC News has received an exclusive detailed look at the array of potential threats federal authorities are tracking in the days leading up to the presidential inauguration.</p> <p>Authorities are tracking up to 10 protests or demonstrations that are being promoted to occur in Washington, D.C. between now and Inauguration Day for what some groups are calling the "Week of Siege," according to a law enforcement source.</p> <p>Federal law enforcement assessments warn of potentially violent elements who may feel emboldened by the successful breach of the Capitol on Jan. 6. There is also concern among federal law enforcement agencies that the shooting death of Ashli Babbitt during the attempted insurrection, the ongoing impeachment of President <a href="#">Donald Trump</a>, and the pending peaceful transfer of power to President-elect <a href="#">Joe Biden</a> could raise the stakes for extremists.</p> <p>Authorities are paying particular attention to an event organized by a collection of right-wing extremist groups, including the Proud Boys. Their ambitions include an idea to hold an event in the coming days to "capture and detain" Democratic politicians and set up a new government led by Republican leaders of their choosing, according to internet postings reviewed by law enforcement.</p> <p>Although security planners do not believe the group will be able to rally the 15,000 participants they are hoping for, law enforcement sources believe that because of an expressed willingness to fight to the death, even small numbers of violent extremists could pose a "grave danger" to law enforcement and Congress.</p> <p>The event organizers also want Trump to stay in office beyond Jan. 20 and want to try and convict congressional Democrats and eliminate "mainstream" media outlets, which they view as anti-American, ABC News has learned.</p> <p>Messages from the organizers state they "will not fire the first shot" but pledged to use "extreme" and possibly "fatal" measures if deemed necessary to reach "our goal of eliminating the Democrat ideology from America forever," according to postings government security planners have reviewed.</p> <p>Other groups are promoting events pledging to surround the White House and the U.S. Capitol to "stop the steal," a reference to the false belief that the outcome of the 2020 presidential election was illegitimate. Law enforcement officers and military members, both current and former, are being encouraged to attend, sources say.</p> <p>A website associated with the anti-government boogaloo movement, whose adherents believe in a coming civil war, are also promoting "the largest armed protest to ever take place on American soil." Participants may want to "avenge the death of Ashli Babbitt" and stop the peaceful transition of power, authorities warn.</p> <p>Still other militia groups are promoting events with the stated beliefs that the election results are "treasonous and illegitimate" and anyone who stands in their way will be "treated as an enemy combatant."</p> <p>Law enforcement officials are also tracking other demonstrations that are being promoted around the city, including the pro-Trump "Let America Hear Us, Roar for Trump" and the "March for Trump," scheduled to occur just days before Trump is scheduled to leave office.</p>

	<p>Many of the proposed venues for these various demonstrations are already locked down for the inauguration and are no longer accessible to the public due to street closures, newly installed non-scalable fencing and heavy armed law enforcement and military presence.</p> <p>However, security planners are mindful that determined protesters in Portland, Oregon, last summer were able to defeat fencing by using power tools, ropes, chains and other improvised tools.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Secret Service warns Boogaloos coming</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/secret-service-warns-that-the-boogaloo-are-coming-to-dc-states?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/secret-service-warns-that-the-boogaloo-are-coming-to-dc-states?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>The Secret Service has issued an intelligence bulletin warning of additional armed protests in Washington before and after the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden—particularly from the Boogaloo Boys—that in some cases it expects to become violent.</p> <p>The Secret Service bulletin, dated Jan. 11, is unclassified but marked not for distribution outside law-enforcement channels, and was obtained by The Daily Beast. The Daily Beast is declining to give specifics for these rallies to prevent insurrectionists from organizing through the media.</p> <p>Although the primary responsibility of the Secret Service is to protect the president, the intelligence bulletin warns of demonstrations slated for state capitols as well. That bolsters a <a href="#">recent warning from the FBI</a> about armed protests across all 50 states. A previous report by Yahoo News said a Dec. 24 document from the FBI's Minnesota field office also warned state and local authorities of threats from right-wing extremist groups at protests in Washington and other state capitols planned for later this month.</p> <p>One demonstration cited in the document is scheduled to take place before the inaugural by the Boogaloos, a loose collective meme-turned-movement of enthusiasts for a second civil war, several adherents of which <a href="#">have been arrested and charged for violence</a> during summer and fall 2020 counterprotests against Black Lives Matter. "Although no civil disobedience has been confirmed," the bulletin states, "organizers have encouraged attendees to bring weapons to the event."</p> <p>Another demonstration scheduled for before the inaugural aims to bring "armed citizens" out for a show of force across both state capitals and Washington, D.C., though the sponsor group, Tree of Liberty, which is <a href="#">affiliated with the Boogaloo</a>, alleges to be peaceful.</p> <p>Although the incitement social-media network Parler has been de-platformed by Apple and Amazon, the Secret Service tracked a user calling for a "Come and Take It" rally, a reference to the Spartan-Persian battle of Thermopylae, that "mentions fighting and posted, 'never never never stop fighting.' It aims to bring supporters to the Capitol and the White House to 'literally PHYSICALLY STOP THE STEAL.'"</p> <p>Backlash from the larger social media and web hosting companies to the Jan. 6 insurrection has had a disruptive effect on planning for right-wing demonstrations, the bulletin found. But that also has the effect of limiting the Secret Service's "ability to review information for... situational awareness on these events," it concedes. Users frustrated by the shutdown of Parler and the de-platforming of many Twitter users are moving to the secure messaging apps Telegraph and Signal, the Secret Service bulletin states.</p> <p>While many of the demonstrations tracked by the Secret Service are cited in the bulletin as typical political protest, from both left-wing and right-wing groups, some of the inauguration protests are expected to be violent.</p> <p>One planned demonstration, called a Million Militia March, displays a logo bearing crossed AR-15s, an ersatz military patch, and both American and <a href="#">Gadsden</a> flags, and purports to be the "1st Regiment of the Restored American Republic." The bulletin says organizers "have encouraged attendees to bring weapons to the event through the use of images of weapons on promotional materials for the event. The group</p>

claims they will not attack, but will defend.” The District of Columbia [does not honor](#) any other state’s gun license or permit.

Yet the Secret Service suggests that the event “appears to be a rough concept” of an organizer prone to posting statements like “I am the smartest human.” But the prevalence of such posts, it continues, might nevertheless give the event a momentum of its own. The organizer “encouraged attendees to wear attire depicting guns and MAGA paraphernalia,” and the iconography of the event includes a picture of an AR-15-style long gun with the caption “To All Democrats: Enjoy Hell.”

During a press briefing on Tuesday, the acting U.S. attorney spearheading the prosecutorial response to the insurrection stated that a grand jury is empaneled to look at additional charges for the Jan. 6 rioters, including [sedition and conspiracy](#)—a suggestion that charges may extend beyond those who participated in the riot to ensnare the Republican politicians who incited it. A senior FBI official, Assistant Director Steven D’Antuono of the Washington Field Office, stated that the bureau was continuing to receive information to disrupt “possibly future violent activity.”

Multiple agencies detailed to help secure the inauguration are contingency planning for events that result in mass casualties or major attacks as well as isolated, violent incidents near the Capitol, according to two senior officials and a separate law enforcement briefing packet obtained by The Daily Beast.

As of Wednesday, President Donald Trump has been briefed by some officials on possible security threats to the Biden inauguration, a White House official told The Daily Beast. Two other sources with direct knowledge of the matter say that in private conversations over the past week, Trump has continued entertaining wildly incorrect conspiracy theories that antifascists had infiltrated the MAGA mob during the Jan. 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol and had caused trouble. Trump has also asked advisers and confidants to look into such rumors.

The president has also raised the antifa and false-flag theories in discussions about potential threats during Inauguration Day, the sources said.

White House spokespeople did not immediately provide comment for this story on Wednesday.

House members were set to be briefed by the Secret Service on Wednesday afternoon about inauguration security measures, according to a congressional source. Senators received a similar briefing on Tuesday.

On Monday, House Democrats got an initial look at the current environment of violent, right-wing threats during a sobering phone briefing from law enforcement. In that call, first reported by HuffPost and later confirmed by The Daily Beast, authorities outlined four different threats from extremists, from a plan to avenge the death of Ashli Babbitt, the MAGA rioter killed by police on Jan. 6, to general danger to lawmakers and law enforcement officials.

As National Guardsmen patrolled the halls of the Capitol building on Wednesday, lawmakers confessed to being uneasy—or at least uncertain—about how they might be kept safe next week.

“I feel safe today,” Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-SC), the third-ranking House Democrat, said to Capitol reporters on Wednesday. “I have no idea how I’m going to feel on the 20th.”

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HEADLINE	01/14 Difficult balance: vaccine supply, demand
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/states-face-difficult-balance-supply-demand-covid-19/story?id=75235553">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/states-face-difficult-balance-supply-demand-covid-19/story?id=75235553</a>
GIST	Public health experts and state officials say most Americans will need to be patient as the available supply of COVID-19 vaccines works to catch up to the demand as states start to make vaccination available to more people.



Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar announced several changes to the vaccine rollout meant to speed things up in his last briefing with Operation Warp Speed, including releasing more doses and pushing governors to expand those eligible to include everyone older than 65 and younger adults with medical conditions.

As governors decide whether to follow Azar's recommendation and make significantly more people eligible for the vaccine, they face concerns about whether the supply coming into the state will be able to keep up with the exploding demand.

Mississippi ran out of vaccine appointments on Wednesday, a day after expanding eligibility to include people 65 and older and people with pre-existing medical conditions. The department of health said it significantly altered the state's distribution plan and it saw a "monumental surge" in demand. All the state's expected vaccine doses are now committed until an expected shipment in mid-February, according to a statement.

New Jersey announced Wednesday that individuals ages 16 to 64 with medical conditions that increase their risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are eligible for the vaccine -- including smokers, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's list of qualifying medical conditions. The groups now eligible are in addition to millions of residents already in line, including people over the age of 65, first responders and health care workers. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said there's an enormous imbalance between supply and demand, but he thinks it will balance out over the next six to eight weeks.

And in Arkansas, the state is set to expand vaccination to include people 70 and older, teachers and day care workers, which Secretary of Health Jose Romero said was decided before Tuesday's announcement. The state does not plan to include adults younger than 65 with health conditions, though he said that could change in a matter of weeks.

"One of the issues now is that because you've opened it up so wide, you know, we hope that there really will be, at least I hope, that there really will be a vaccine available for us," he told ABC News.

CDC Director Robert Redfield told governors this week they should try to use 85 to 90% of their available doses to help reduce the number of people being hospitalized for COVID-19.

And public health experts like Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of public health at Brown University, said it was a good move from the administration to start releasing doses held back to ensure that everybody gets their second dose to respond to the urgency of the surge in the country right now.

"We're holding way too many doses back, we're in a crisis and what people are saying, let's get those doses out to people, the production system is working. We'll get second doses to everybody as quickly as possible," Jha said on "Good Morning America."

But even as the federal government works to release more doses in the final week of the Trump administration, experts say it will take time to catch up with demand from more populous groups being added to the list of people eligible for the vaccines.

Claire Hannan, executive director of the Association of Immunization Managers, said that despite public frustration about the seemingly slow pace, much of the vaccine rollout has gone according to plan and that big changes could add more challenges to the process.

"You're creating eight days of chaos, anxiety and confusion. And it's disappointing," she told ABC News.

Hannan said making the vaccine available to older Americans as soon as possible makes sense in part because it's easy to prioritize people by age. But she said including the younger adults with medical conditions is not feasible at this stage because the amount of vaccines available won't dramatically increase to keep up with demand.



"That's a really large group, and it's really difficult to prioritize that group, certainly not as easy as age. So that's really taking states and governors out of one difficult position and putting them into another difficult position," she said.

Romero is also chair of the CDC advisory committee that recommended which states should prioritize in the early phases of vaccine distribution. He said he doesn't know why the federal government decided to deviate from the stages they discussed because many states were already expanding the groups of people being vaccinated.

"The recommendations for the phases was never intended to be a bottleneck for the diffusion of a vaccine into the public. It was a guide to identify the highest risk individual, and where you would get the maximum benefit with minimal harm," he told ABC.

And Romero said state officials now face the added challenge of how to vaccinate more Americans while not neglecting front-line workers and other priority groups vulnerable to the virus who may be more difficult to reach, like workers in meatpacking plants in Arkansas.

"I do not think that the secretaries of health or chief medical officers for the states have abandoned those essential groups. They're still on our radar," he said.

Romero said he's concerned about plans to change the way vaccine doses are allocated to states to direct more doses to those administering the vaccine more quickly and with a larger population of people 65 and older. He said he already contacted the CDC earlier this week to correct the vaccination rate for Arkansas because the agency had the incorrect data file.

Hannan said she's concerned about a push to provide more doses of the vaccine to locations other than hospitals, which Azar blamed for being too centralized and delaying more vaccinations or holding on to doses. She said spreading a limited supply across more sites could create confusion or frustration if fewer doses are available at each location.

"So the question is whether we want to try to spread limited supplies of vaccine across a bunch of providers, or whether we want to give it out in clinics that can consistently vaccinate throughout over time. And, you know, to set up a system where, you know, we can prioritize seniors to make appointments for the vaccine," she said.

Azar said he wants to move up the timeline for local and national chain pharmacies to start vaccinating the public through an agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services. Representatives from CVS and Walgreens said that at this point, any vaccine they receive and who is eligible to receive them is being determined at the state and local level, but a CVS spokesperson said they would receive doses directly from the federal government when the partnership is activated.

Both CVS and Walgreens will use appointments managed through their websites or a 1-800 number, the COVID-19 vaccine will not be available through walk-ins like a yearly flu shot. Local health departments will provide information on when the COVID-19 vaccines will be available to eligible groups at pharmacies in their area.

Even in states that have already started to expand vaccinations to more of the population, officials have had to send the difficult message that not everyone will be able to get vaccinated right away.

Florida made the vaccine available to people over 65 at the beginning of the year, leading to reports of long lines and older Americans waiting outside clinics early in the morning. As the state expands vaccinations to include businesses like Publix, Gov. Ron DeSantis urged people to be patient. He said it would be easier to get an appointment as more people get vaccinated.

	<p>"This thing is like the new iPhone times 10 in demand. The servers melt, when we do phones, the phones line melt," he said, adding that companies like Publix are able to manage appointments booked on their website more efficiently.</p> <p>"As new vaccines, as they get the next shipment scheduled, they're going to schedule you for that. And if you didn't get a chance this week, you'll get a chance next week. It's going to happen," he said at a press conference on Wednesday.</p> <p>"We have way more demand than we have supply but this is going to happen and so just hang in there."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Electric vehicle fires risks first responders</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/ntsb-vehicle-battery-fires-pose-risks-1st-responders-75224666">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/ntsb-vehicle-battery-fires-pose-risks-1st-responders-75224666</a>
GIST	<p>DETROIT -- Electric vehicle fires pose safety risks to first responders and guidelines from manufacturers about how to deal with them have been inadequate, according to U.S. investigators.</p> <p>There are also gaps in industry safety standards and research on high-voltage lithium-ion battery fires, especially in high-speed, severe crashes, the National Transportation Safety Board said Wednesday.</p> <p>The agency, which has no enforcement powers and can only make recommendations, called for manufacturers to write vehicle-specific response guides for fighting battery fires and limiting chemical thermal runaway and reignition. The guidelines also should include information on how to safely store vehicles with damaged lithium-ion batteries.</p> <p>The recommendations come at a time when automakers are rolling out multiple new electric vehicle models, with many in the industry perceiving an inflection point in switching from gasoline power to cleaner electricity.</p> <p>The agency in its Wednesday report also asked firefighter and auto towing associations to inform members about fire risks and how to deal with energy remaining in the battery after a crash, and on how to safely store a vehicle with a damaged battery.</p> <p>And it's asking the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to include the availability of an emergency response guide when it calculates five-star vehicle safety scores.</p> <p>NHTSA also should build a coalition to research ways to de-energize batteries and reduce hazards from thermal runaway, a chemical reaction that causes uncontrolled battery temperature and pressure increases.</p> <p>The NTSB started investigating battery fires after crashes and fires in Lake Forest and Mountain View, California, and in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, in 2017 and 2018. It also probed a non-crash fire in West Hollywood, California. Three of the batteries reignited after fires were extinguished.</p> <p>All four vehicles were made by Tesla, which is the top-selling electric vehicle maker in the U.S.</p> <p>"The risks of electric shock and battery reignition/fire arise from the 'stranded' energy that remains in a damaged battery," the agency said.</p> <p>In the August, 2017 fire in Lake Forest, a Tesla Model X battery caught fire after the vehicle left a road and crashed into a residential garage at a high speed. Thomas Barth, an NTSB engineer and highway investigator, said in an agency video that firefighters poured thousands of gallons of water onto the roof of the vehicle. "They didn't realize that they had to direct water onto the battery compartment under the car to cool the battery and stop the reaction causing the fire," he said.</p>

	<p>In an 80-page report the NTSB wrote that a review of emergency response guidelines from 36 manufacturers found that all had ways to mitigate the risk of high-voltage shocks including methods for disconnecting the battery. But none of the guides spoke to limiting the risk of energy stored in the batteries, such as procedures for minimizing reignition or instructions on where and how to spray water to cool the batteries, the agency said.</p> <p>One way to deal with damaged batteries is to pull them from the vehicle and soak them in a saltwater bath to discharge the energy, the NTSB wrote.</p> <p>The National Fire Protection Association, which provides training to first responders and tow companies, said it already has addressed most of the NTSB recommendations. Andrew Klock, emerging issues lead manager, says the group has put out training on how to extinguish battery fires, then jack up vehicles and douse the batteries with water to limit reignition.</p> <p>The NFPA has trained about 250,000 first responders, but there are 1.2 million firefighters nationwide, Klock said.</p> <p>In a statement, NHTSA said that last week it started a battery safety initiative to address growing concerns about electric vehicle and structure fires ignited by batteries. Under the initiative, the agency will analyze data, investigate fires and oversee investigations of electric vehicle crashes, the agency said.</p> <p>The Alliance for Automotive Innovation, a large automaker trade group, said it will review the recommendations and is working with fire associations, NHTSA, the Society of Automotive Engineers and others to improve safety.</p> <p>Messages were left Wednesday seeking comment from Tesla and the National Fire Protection Association.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Ethiopia agency: latest massacre kills 80</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/watchdog-80-dead-massacre-ethiopia-75224208">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/watchdog-80-dead-massacre-ethiopia-75224208</a>
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya -- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said Wednesday it has received information that over 80 civilians were killed early Tuesday in the latest massacre in the western Benishangul-Gumuz region.</p> <p>“These harrowing killings have to stop,” senior adviser Aaron Maasho said. “For the umpteenth time, we call on authorities at the federal and regional level to enhance coordination among themselves and strengthen their security presence in the area.”</p> <p>The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation reported that the killings occurred in the region’s Metekel zone, Dibate county. It spoke to witnesses who said “women and children fell victim in great numbers.”</p> <p>The report cited witnesses as saying more than 100 civilians were killed and some bodies have still not been collected from the scene.</p> <p>Ethnic violence poses a major challenge to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as he tries to promote national unity in a country with more than 80 ethnic groups.</p> <p>More than 100 people were killed in a massacre in the Metekel zone last month, a day after Abiy visited the region and spoke about the need to end such massacres.</p> <p>The attacks are separate from the deadly conflict in Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region, where Ethiopian forces and allied regional forces began fighting Tigray regional forces in early November.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Colombia struggles: social leaders safety</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/colombia-struggles-social-leaders-safe-75223999">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/colombia-struggles-social-leaders-safe-75223999</a>
GIST	<p>BOGOTA, Colombia -- Just taking a walk in the streets of Colombia's capital can feel dangerous for Luz Nelly Santana.</p> <p>The Afro-Colombian community leader sometimes she uses a hat or a turban for disguise. She always wears a bulletproof vest. And she's followed by a bodyguard assigned by the government.</p> <p>"I get death threats on the phone every month," Santana said, "and once a man entered my office and said he was going to kill me."</p> <p>Santana, who runs an organization that helps community leaders fleeing violence to settle in Bogota, is one of more than 3,700 activists given some sort of protection from Colombia's government.</p> <p>The country is widely seen as one of the world's most dangerous places to be a community leader or advocate for human rights or environmental issues. Last year 120 community leaders were murdered in Colombia according to the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Human Rights, up from 107 a year earlier.</p> <p>Decades of bloody civil conflict involving government forces, leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries linked to landowners and powerful drug trafficking groups have created an atmosphere in which many factions feel little hesitation at trying to kill or intimidate those who oppose them.</p> <p>Activists are often targeted for denouncing or being seen to interfere with drug trafficking or illegal logging or mining, or for trying to protect communities confronting armed gangs.</p> <p>Santana survived a 1994 massacre in which active guerrillas attacked a street party organized by another leftist faction that was trying to abandon arms and embrace above-ground politics. She and her daughter huddled at home as 35 people were being killed outside, and decided to flee to the capital where she has lived ever since.</p> <p>Colombia's Attorney General's Office says most of the attacks in recent years on community leaders have come from drug trafficking groups like the Gulf Clan and elements of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia that broke off from the guerrilla group after it demobilized following a 2016 peace deal with Colombia's government.</p> <p>Officials also say that a smaller rebel group, the National Liberation Army, has been involved in attacking social leaders.</p> <p>Camilo Gonzalez Posso, president of the Institute for Peace and Development think tank, said much of the violence stems from groups fighting to control drug routes and businesses, such as illegal mines, abandoned by the former rebels after the peace agreement.</p> <p>"We thought that our situation would improve with the peace deal, but it hasn't turned out that way" said Clemencia Carabalí, an activist in the southwestern province of Cauca who helps mobilize victims of Colombia's conflicts to seek reparations. "Many times I can't even leave my house, and I have to avoid moving around at certain times and going to some places" she said.</p> <p>Others have taken more extreme measures. Luis Ernesto Olave, from the western province of Choco, said he had to leave Colombia several times after receiving death threats from the National Liberation Army. Now 46, he's spent half of his life promoting human rights and fighting against illegal mining and corruption in his province.</p> <p>"We have noticed that when community leaders are threatened they go silent, as well as their organizations, and that interrupts the creation of new groups" said Sirley Muñoz a spokeswoman for Somos Defensores — "We are Defenders" — an organization that tracks threats against activists.</p>

	<p>On Dec. 5, indigenous leader Miguel Tapi was killed in the district of Bahia Solano on Colombia's Pacific coast. Following the murder, more than 800 members of his community fled their village.</p> <p>Colombian officials have said that protecting social leaders is a "national priority" and the government has strengthened a unit to prosecute crimes against them, devoting more resources for bodyguards and bulletproof vehicles.</p> <p>But critics say these plans have failed to reduce the violence. The U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, recently urged the government to increase protection for activists in rural areas.</p> <p>Many keep working despite the threats, though sometimes from afar.</p> <p>Darwin Cuero, from the town of Tumaco on Colombia's Pacific coast, fled to Bogota after two of his brothers were murdered and he received threats. The Cuero family were well-known activists in Tumaco who had backed the 2016 peace deal.</p> <p>Darwin said he will continue to work with victims' organizations to seek justice.</p> <p>"While I am alive and breathing, I will continue to do what I can to bring attention to the rights of victims" Cuero said. "The Colombian state has not been able to guarantee their right to life."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 CAR: soldiers repel rebels at capital</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/soldiers-repel-rebels-central-african-republic-capital-75219574">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/soldiers-repel-rebels-central-african-republic-capital-75219574</a>
GIST	<p>BANGUI, Central African Republic -- Security forces in Central African Republic repelled attacks by rebels trying to seize the capital early Wednesday after intense fighting on the city's outskirts, officials said, in a major escalation of violence that has rocked the country since last month.</p> <p>At least one Rwandan peacekeeper has been killed, and another injured, according to the U.N. mission in the country. At least 30 rebels have been killed, according to Prime Minister Firmin Ngrebada.</p> <p>The rebels are protesting the re-election on Dec. 27 of President Faustin-Archange Touadera. Following the Jan. 4 announcement of Touadera's victory, the rebel coalition threatened to take the capital. They had also taken towns in other parts of the country before the election.</p> <p>The army is supported in its battle against the rebels by forces from Rwanda, Russia, France and the United Nations.</p> <p>The fighting began early Wednesday at the entrance to Bangui, near its PK11 and PK12 areas and in the Bimbo neighborhood, Prime Minister Ngrebada said in a post on Facebook.</p> <p>"The attackers who came in large numbers to take Bangui have been vigorously pushed back," he said.</p> <p>Residents described heavy gunfire in various parts of Bangui.</p> <p>The Minister of Public Security, Gen. Henri Wanzet-Linguissara confirmed the attacks Wednesday.</p> <p>"Early this morning, the criminals, the rebels and enemies of the people of Central African Republic, the mercenaries and terrorists, including the Central Africans who lead them, they launched the assault in the Begoua sector. But the defense and security forces did not let their guard down," he said.</p>

U.N. forces in Central African Republic, known as MINUSCA, and other allied forces engaged as well, he said.

“We stood up as one man and we routed them. They are on the run everywhere,” he said, asking Bangui’s residents to be vigilant and signal the presence of rebels so that they can be tracked.

Abakar Sabone, spokesman for the rebel coalition and head of military operations who had warned of an attack on Bangui earlier this month, accused the government of being behind the chaos. He said Touadera must sign agreements with the rebels.

“We must protect our country, defend the interests of this country,” he said. “If it is about war, we have weapons. Touadera has abused the confidence of the people.”

The fighting around Bangui comes one week before the Constitutional Court is to rule on the validity of the election results. The opposition had urged the court to order a re-run of the vote because of the insecurity and alleged irregularities.

Former president Francois Bozize has been blamed for inflaming the violence, which erupted after the constitutional court rejected his candidacy in December.

The attackers have used rocket-propelled grenades against both the army and U.N. forces, said Richard Moncrieff from the International Crisis Group, who called the rebels' attacks part of an ongoing coup attempt.

“It seems likely that their intention is to cause trouble and to push the United Nations to defend Bangui, therefore leaving provincial towns vulnerable,” he told The Associated Press. Moncrieff said that while the rebels currently did not deploy enough combatants to take the capital, the coming days will be telling.

Bangui has a much larger U.N. contingent than in 2013, when rebels last took the capital and overthrew Bozize, so the capital is likely to remain secure, he said. However, if widespread fighting on the outskirts of the capital continues and increases, “there is a real risk of polarization between different ethnic communities or simply between different political militia,” he said.

The fighting is a setback to Touadera's incoming government as it had hoped to rebuild state authority, the army and national police, he said. The rebels have shown they do not intend to cooperate with a peace agreement signed in 2019 and also “have proven their capacity to disrupt life outside the capital very significantly,” Moncrieff said.

While it’s unlikely immediate talks between the rebels and the government will take place given the violence Wednesday, it will be important for that possibility to remain open, he said.

Negotiations with the political opposition remain key, he added, after they rejected results on the grounds of insecurity that caused few registered people to vote outside the capital.

The U.N. mission in Central African Republic, known as MINUSCA, condemned the attacks on the capital city.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Mankeur Ndiaye, said that it holds former president Francois Bozize and his allies responsible for the attacks.

“The mission holds them responsible for the consequences of this violence on the civilian population and stresses that attacks against peacekeepers can be considered as war crimes and prosecuted,” he said in a statement.

	<p>A judicial investigation has been opened into the role of Bozize, who was in exile until returning to the nation in December 2019, according to the Attorney General at the Bangui Court of Appeal.</p> <p>Bozize, who took power in a coup in 2003 and ruled until 2013, faces an international arrest warrant for “crimes against humanity and incitement of genocide.” He also faces U.N. sanctions for his alleged role in supporting the rebel groups that resisted the Seleka in 2013.</p> <p>The mineral-rich Central African Republic has faced deadly inter-religious and inter-communal fighting since 2013, when predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power from Bozize after long claiming marginalization. Resistance to Seleka rule eventually led to Muslims being targeted en masse, with some beaten to death, mosques destroyed and tens of thousands forced from the capital in 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Spain: snow adds misery to Madrid slum</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/spain-snow-adds-misery-madrid-slum-area-power-75222027">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/spain-snow-adds-misery-madrid-slum-area-power-75222027</a>
GIST	<p>MADRID -- As record snowfall and sub-freezing temperatures enveloped much of normally temperate Spain, few residents suffered as severely as the thousands who live in La Cañada Real Galiana, a mega-shantytown outside Madrid that is ranked as one of the biggest slum areas in Europe.</p> <p>Much of La Cañada Real had already been without electricity for months before Storm Filomena arrived. Officials say that's because marijuana growers in the informal settlement diverted power supplies to indoor plantations that overwhelmed the grid. The extended outage meant that more than half of the 7,500 residents in the “poblado,” or township, remained without power during brutal weather more suited to Siberia.</p> <p>“It’s very cold, and we have no light,” resident Yolanda Martín Herrera said this week after temperatures dropped to as low as minus 16 degrees Celsius (3 F) in the greater Madrid area. “We’re practically out of firewood and can’t get more because of the snow.”</p> <p>With both her and her husband out of work since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, Martín Herrera, 47, said they survive on her mother’s pension of some 600 euros (\$730) a month. Few social services were available to help the area’s residents cope with the added emergency of extreme weather.</p> <p>“We’re forgotten about here,” Martín Herrera said. “We’re people, not animals.”</p> <p>The substandard housing and shacks that make up La Cañada stretch some 14 kilometers (9 miles) on the Spanish capital’s industrial outskirts. The settlement spread over several decades along a former path for driving livestock as poor Spaniards, Spanish Roma people and Moroccan migrants sought somewhere to live.</p> <p>The area runs through a flat, nondescript landscape and consists of basically a single road with side paths, some of it paved, leading to a mixture of decent houses in its better-off areas and shacks constructed of simple brick, metal panels and canvas sheets.</p> <p>Residents live off construction jobs or by collecting scrap metal or whatever they can. The area has long been associated with sales of illegal drugs, mostly cocaine and heroin. In recent years, growing marijuana in basements and garages with powerful lamps became an extra source of income for some.</p> <p>La Cañada has few basic services with just one mobile medical unit visiting each day and a bus that takes children to nearby schools. The local shops are flimsy set-ups with little on hand to sell and almost no fresh food.</p>



Plans have been afoot for several years to improve facilities and rehouse the neediest residents, but the area typically does not register on the Spanish public's radar. However, La Cañada Real recently resurfaced in people's awareness with the news that two of its poorest areas had been without electricity since October.

The outage left an estimated 4,600 people, including some 1,800 children, dependent on gas bottles and small fuel-powered generators for heat and to cook.

"We're having a bad time," said Jesús Pérez, 49 who lives with his wife and eight children in a shanty. "Nobody helps us. They didn't come to clear the snow, they don't provide solutions or anything. We're abandoned here. These people don't listen to us and that's it."

The situation spurred the U.N. Human Rights Council to issue a statement before Christmas demanding an immediate resolution.

"Without electricity, there is no heat in homes and no hot water, meaning children cannot shower or wash properly," the statement said. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, when hygiene is more important than ever, this is especially troubling."

Residents have blamed both private national utility company Naturgy and Madrid authorities, who said marijuana growers were responsible for the power outage and that illegal drug activity in La Cañada needs to be tackled before electricity is restored. .

"The electricity supply has never been turned off," Alfonso Adánez, a spokesman for the Madrid region's housing department, said. "The problem is each time it's on, it keeps being cut off because of surges from the plantations."

The electricity infrastructure in the area was originally designed to power an old furniture factory. Over the years, many residents, mostly those areas of extreme poverty, ran cables from the power lines to heat and light their residences. Authorities have generally permitted the diversions, although they are technically illegal.

Officials and non-governmental organizations say police must dismantle the marijuana grows, but so far that doesn't appear to have happened. It was not immediately possible to get comment from the Spanish government, which would have authority to order such a raid.

"Right now, it's obvious we have a problem of incompetence or inability to resolve the problem of the electricity," Pablo Choza, the head of projects at La Cañada Real for the Catholic charity Cáritas. He said the area always has had water and electricity supply problems, but they are normally resolved relatively quickly.

Choza said the majority of residents "are normal people trying their best to make a living" and that many of La Cañada's troubles stem from being stigmatized as a drug zone by officials and the news media.

The U.N. Human Rights Council office also criticized authorities for blaming the outages on marijuana plantations and implying that the settlement's residents are criminals.

Local authorities on Tuesday reported that Naturgy workers, accompanied by police, had begun cutting suspect connections to the plantations. Electricity to the two affected areas was not yet restored.

In the wake of Storm Filomena, the Madrid regional government tried to distribute some 100 gas bottles and heaters on Monday but workers were met with barricades, insults and stone-throwing from some residents, according to Adánez, a sign of the complexity of the problem. Residents says gas bottles are not a solution.

	<p>The regional government also set up emergency shelters that could accommodate more than 500 people during the weather crisis. But as of Tuesday, only one family had accepted the offer of a place to stay.</p> <p>“With the situation that there is with the pandemic, I am not going to a shelter,” La Cañada resident Gemma San José Herraiz said. “I have a home. What I don’t have is electricity.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, the nonprofit group Save the Children called for the Spanish military’s emergency service to be sent in to restore power in La Cañada until a proper solution is found.</p> <p>“Children and their families are freezing in their houses,” Catalina Perazzo, the organization’s director of awareness and childhood policies in Spain, said in a statement. “We’re on the threshold of a tragedy if action is not taken right now.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/13 Jerusalem approves US embassy location</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/jerusalem-approves-location-us-embassy-75231347">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/jerusalem-approves-location-us-embassy-75231347</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>JERUSALEM -- Jerusalem municipal authorities said Wednesday they have given preliminary approval to a location for a new U.S. Embassy in the city.</p> <p>In a statement on Twitter, Deputy Mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum said the city's building and planning committee approved the plans. She told The Associated Press that another committee must still grant approval, which she expects to happen in the coming weeks.</p> <p>The location is on the city's Hebron Road, a central thoroughfare, and not far from the current temporary embassy. The site is near an invisible line that divides west and east Jerusalem, the part of the city captured in the 1967 Mideast war and claimed by the Palestinians for a future capital. It was not immediately clear if it crosses the boundary.</p> <p>In a controversial move, the outgoing Trump administration recognized contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city in 2018. It was one of a string of diplomatic gifts delivered by President Donald Trump to Israel.</p> <p>President-elect Joe Biden is expected to take a more balanced approach toward Israel and the Palestinians, but he has said he does not plan on moving the embassy back to Tel Aviv.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>01/14 More arrests by Hong Kong security unit</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lawyer-10-arrested-hong-kong-crackdown-75240530">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lawyer-10-arrested-hong-kong-crackdown-75240530</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>HONG KONG -- Hong Kong police on Thursday arrested a lawyer and 10 others on suspicion of helping 12 Hong Kong activists try to flee the city, media reported.</p> <p>The fresh wave of arrests comes a week after 55 activists were apprehended in the largest move against Hong Kong’s democracy movement since Beijing imposed a new national security law last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous territory.</p> <p>The clampdown has intensified concerns that Beijing is asserting more control over the city and breaking its promise of Hong Kong maintaining separate civil rights and political systems for 50 years from the handover from Britain in 1997.</p>

Police arrested eight men and three women aged 18 to 72 for “assisting offenders,” according to the South China Morning Post, which cited unnamed sources. They were quoted as saying that investigations so far indicated those arrested were not in breach of any offences under the national security law.

Those arrested are suspected of helping the 12 Hong Kong youth who were detained at sea by mainland Chinese authorities while attempting to sail to Taiwan last August. Some of the fugitives were wanted in Hong Kong for offenses related to anti-government protests in 2019.

Police did not immediately comment on the arrests.

District councilor and lawyer Daniel Wong Kwok-tung posted on his Facebook page that national security officers had arrived at his home. He was later taken to his office, where police conducted a search.

Wong, a member of the Democratic Party, is known for providing legal assistance to hundreds of activists arrested during the 2019 protests.

Last month, 10 of those detained at sea were sentenced to prison in Shenzhen for illegally crossing the border, with sentences ranging between seven months to three years. The two other detainees, who are minors, were handed over to Hong Kong and could face further charges in the city for absconding, authorities said.

Hong Kong has jailed several pro-democracy activists in recent months, including Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow, for their involvement in anti-government protests. Others have been charged under the national security law, including media tycoon and outspoken pro-democracy advocate Jimmy Lai.

The security law criminalizes acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers to intervene in the city’s affairs. Serious offenders could face up to life imprisonment.

Last week, the foreign ministers of Australia, the United States, Great Britain and Canada issued a joint statement expressing “serious concern” about the arrests. They said “it is clear that the National Security Law is being used to eliminate dissent and opposing political views.”

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HEADLINE	01/13 Honduran migrants head to Guatemala
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/honduran-migrants-head-guatemala-border-police-wait-75242449">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/honduran-migrants-head-guatemala-border-police-wait-75242449</a>
GIST	<p>SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras -- About 200 migrants began walking up a highway toward the border with Guatemala late Wednesday, two days before a migrant caravan was scheduled to depart San Pedro Sula.</p> <p>Some 75 police officers dressed in riot gear waited at a point farther along the highway on the outskirts of San Pedro Sula. One officer said the intention was to stop the migrants for violating a pandemic-related curfew, check their documents and make sure they weren't traveling with children that were not their own.</p> <p>Later, the migrants stopped about two kilometers short of the waiting police and bedded down for the night under and around a highway overpass. They planned to wait until the curfew expired at 5 a.m. before continuing.</p> <p>The migrants faced the additional challenge of governments that agreed earlier this week to enforce immigration laws at their borders.</p> <p>For weeks, a call for a new caravan departing Jan. 15 has circulated on social networks. In previous caravans, smaller groups have often left earlier than the main caravan. More migrants were expected to converge on San Pedro Sula on Thursday.</p>

Ariel Villega, 35, from the town of Ocotepeque, was walking with his wife and 10-year-old son. He said they planned to get to the Corinto border crossing and wait there for the rest of the caravan to arrive.

"We've got everything, the passport and the COVID test," Villega said. He said they were leaving because he couldn't find work. "First the pandemic and later the two (hurricanes) left us in crisis."

Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei on Wednesday night decreed a "state of prevention" along the country's border with Honduras. The decree noted the threat of migrants entering without required documentation and without following pandemic-related screening at the border. Guatemala is requiring proof of a negative COVID-19 test. The decree said more than 2,000 national police and soldiers would be stationed at the border.

The Mexican government said Wednesday that it and 10 other countries in North and Central America are worried about the health risks of COVID-19 among migrants without proper documents.

The statement by the 11-member Regional Conference on Migration suggests that Mexico and Central America could continue to turn back migrants on the basis of the perceived risks of the pandemic.

The group "expressed concern over the exposure of irregular migrants to situations of high risk to their health and their lives, primarily during the health emergency."

On Monday, representatives from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador met in the Honduran city of Corinto at the Guatemala border to discuss coordination on migration.

In a joint statement, the governments expressed their commitment to protect human rights, but also called for migration to be orderly and legal.

When hundreds of Hondurans tried to form a caravan last month, authorities stopped them before they even reached the Guatemala border. Other attempted caravans last year were broken up by Guatemalan authorities before they reached Mexico.

Pressure to migrate has only been building. Central America was hit with two Category 4 hurricanes in November, devastating a region already struggling with the pandemic. The storms destroyed crops, shuttered businesses and displaced thousands.

Migrants have also expressed hope that they could receive a warmer welcome at the U.S. border under the administration of President-elect Joe Biden, who takes office next week.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/14 Lebanon shutdown; virus out of control</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lebanon-begins-day-curfew-virus-spins-control-75244310">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lebanon-begins-day-curfew-virus-spins-control-75244310</a>
GIST	<p>BEIRUT -- Lebanese authorities began enforcing an 11-day nationwide shutdown and round the clock curfew Thursday, hoping to limit the spread of coronavirus infections spinning out of control after the holiday period.</p> <p>For the first time, residents were required to request a one-hour permit to be allowed to leave the house for "emergencies," including going to the bakery, pharmacist, doctor, hospital or airport.</p> <p>Authorities came under pressure to take a tougher approach after the country's hospitals ran out of beds with daily infections reaching an all-time high of 5,440 cases last week in the country of nearly 6 million people.</p>

Even before the coronavirus, Lebanon was going through an unprecedented economic and financial crisis that has seen its national currency and bank sector collapse and locked depositors out of the savings. Hospitals, long considered among the best in the Middle East, struggled to pay staff, keep equipment running and secure necessary medical supplies as dollars grew scarce.

Amid the surge, many hospitals have now reached maximum capacity for coronavirus patients. Some have halted elective surgeries as they run out of beds, oxygen tanks and ventilators.

Furthermore, the country has been without a government since the old one resigned in the wake of the catastrophic Aug. 4 explosion at Beirut port, which put a further strain on hospitals, inundating them with injured. At least three hospitals were destroyed.

The massive explosion caused by the detonation of a stockpile of poorly stored ammonium nitrate ravaged the city, killing over 200 people and injuring thousands.

On Thursday, police manned checkpoints around the country, checking motorists' permits to be on the road. The curfew is the strictest since the start of the pandemic. For the first time, even supermarkets were told to close their doors and open for delivery only.

Lebanon had only just announced a nationwide lockdown last week. But many, including the health minister and officials on a government committee, considered it to be too lenient because it exempted many sectors. In some areas of the country, it was business as usual, leading to more calls for a complete shutdown and curfew.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 US bans China cotton, tomato; slave labor</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/us-bans-cotton-tomato-products-xinjiang-slave-labor/story?id=75226217">https://abcnews.go.com/International/us-bans-cotton-tomato-products-xinjiang-slave-labor/story?id=75226217</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Wednesday it will detain all cotton and tomato products produced in <a href="#">China</a>'s Xinjiang province.</p> <p>The Withhold Release Order (WRO) issued by CBP is based on information that "reasonably indicates" the use of forced labor within China's so-called "re-education" camps. CBP also claims China is oppressing its Muslim population in that region.</p> <p>"The goal isn't just to interdict shipments ... that's actually the fallback plan," Acting DHS Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli told reporters Wednesday. "The goal of the WRO is that they stop and that the shipments never arrive -- the ultimate goal is that China abandons these horrific practices."</p> <p>This is the fourth WRO that CBP has issued in 2021 and the second on products originating in Xinjiang. China's Xinjiang province accounted for eight of the 13 WROs that CBP issued in 2020 -- all stemming from allegations of forced labor.</p> <p>CBP officials and human rights experts estimate that somewhere between 1 million to 3 million Uighurs, Kazakhs and others are being detained in what U.S. Secretary of State <a href="#">Mike Pompeo</a> has dubbed "internment camps" throughout China's Xinjiang province. There are about 1,300 of these facilities scattered throughout the region and they've allegedly forced detainees to work without compensation in nearby factories, according to those same officials.</p> <p>Evidence from Chinese government documents and media reports indicate that hundreds of thousands of Uighurs in Xinjiang are forced to pick cotton by hand via state-mandated labor, according to a report by the Center for Global Policy published last month. The Chinese government strongly denies all claims of forced labor in Xinjiang.</p>

"I've said this before and I'll say it again: Made in China does not just indicate a country of origin," said Cuccinelli. "It's a warning label."

Cotton is Xinjiang's largest export; cotton exports from China are approximately a \$9 billion industry. Last month, CBP issued a WRO on Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which had accounted for 17% of those cotton exports.

CBP has not yet quantified Xinjiang's tomato export output, but China's overall output of tomatoes is a \$10 million industry, according to export data from 2019.

CBP officials emphasized on the call Wednesday that most of the onus falls on importers and consumers -- urging them to diligently research their supply chains prior to purchasing items from China in general.

"If you're buying apparel and it's considerably lower than the fair market value everywhere else, there's a reason for that," said CBP Acting Commissioner Mark A. Morgan. "Take a few minutes, understand where it's coming from -- is it coming from this region?"

Human rights coalitions have praised the action taken from the U.S. against Beijing's alleged abuses.

"CBP's action is a high-decibel wakeup call to any apparel brand that continues to deny the prevalence and problem of forced-labor produced cotton from the Uyghur region," said Scott Nova, executive director of the Workers Rights Consortium, a member of the coalition to End Uyghur Forced Labour. "The days when any major apparel brand can safely profit from Xinjiang cotton are over."

Scrutiny against China's actions in Xinjiang has mounted in recent months over allegations of forced sterilization of their Uighur population that surfaced last summer.

The scrutiny made its way to social media last week, when Twitter removed a [controversial tweet](#) by the Chinese Embassy in the U.S. In the tweet, the embassy shared an unsubstantiated report on population growth in Xinjiang and wrote that Muslim women in the province were "no longer baby-making machines," adding that the decrease in population growth had led to a drop in terrorism.

"After further review we have taken action on this tweet for violating our rules against dehumanization," a Twitter spokesperson said.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Ugandans vote in tense election</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/worth-life-ugandans-vote-tense-election-75242076">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/worth-life-ugandans-vote-tense-election-75242076</a>
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda -- Ugandans were voting Thursday in a presidential election tainted by widespread violence that some fear could escalate as security forces try to stop supporters of leading opposition challenger Bobi Wine from monitoring polling stations. Internet access has been cut off.</p> <p>Long lines of voters snaked into the distance in the capital, Kampala. "This is a miracle," mechanic Steven Kaderere said. "This shows me that Ugandans this time are determined to vote for the leader they want. I have never seen this before."</p> <p>But delays were seen in the delivery of polling materials in some places, including where Wine was to vote.</p> <p>Results are expected within 48 hours of polls closing at 4 p.m. More than 17 million people are registered voters in this East African country of 45 million people. A candidate must win more than 50% to avoid a runoff vote.</p>

Longtime President Yoweri Museveni, an authoritarian who has wielded power since 1986, seeks a sixth term against a strong challenge from Wine, a popular young singer-turned-opposition lawmaker. Nine other challengers are trying to unseat Museveni.

Wine, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, has seen many associates jailed or go into hiding as security forces crack down on opposition supporters they fear could mount a street uprising leading to regime change. Wine insists he is running a nonviolent campaign.

Wine, of the National Unity Platform party, has said he does not believe the election is free and fair. He has urged supporters to linger near polling stations to protect their votes. But the electoral commission, which the opposition sees as weak, has said voters must return home after casting ballots.

Internet access was cut Wednesday night. “No matter what they do, the world is watching,” Wine tweeted.

“This election has already been rigged,” another opposition candidate, Patrick Oboi Amuriat, told local broadcaster NTV as polls opened, adding that “we will not accept the outcome of this election.”

The government’s decision this week to shut down access to social media in retaliation over Facebook’s removal of Museveni-linked Ugandan accounts accused of inauthentic behavior was meant “to limit the eyes on the election and, therefore, hide something,” said Crispin Kaheru, an independent election observer.

The 76-year-old Museveni’s support has traditionally been concentrated in rural areas where many credit him with restoring a sense of peace and security that was lost during the regimes of dictators including Idi Amin.

Security forces have deployed heavily in the area that encompasses Kampala, where the opposition has strong support partly because of rampant unemployment even among college graduates.

“Museveni is putting all the deployments in urban areas where the opposition has an advantage,” said Gerald Bareebe, an assistant professor of political science at Canada’s York University. “If you ask many Ugandans now, they say the ballot paper is not worth my life.”

Some young people said they would vote despite the apparent risks.

“This government has ruled us badly. They have really squeezed us,” said Allan Sserwadda, a car washer. “They have ruled us for years and they say they have ideas. But they are not the only ones who have ideas.”

Asked if the heavy military deployment fazed him, he smiled and said: “If we are to die, let us die. Now there is no difference between being alive and being dead. Bullets can find you anywhere. They can find you at home. They can find you on the veranda.”

At least 54 people were killed in Uganda in November as security forces put down riots provoked by the arrest of Wine for allegedly violating campaign regulations aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

Wine has captured the imagination of many in Uganda, and elsewhere in Africa, with his bold calls for the retirement of Museveni, whom he sees as a part of a corrupt old guard.

Museveni has dismissed the 38-year-old Wine as “an agent of foreign interests” who cannot be trusted with power. Wine has been arrested many times on various charges but has never been convicted.

Museveni, who decades ago criticized African leaders over not leaving power, now seeks more time in office after lawmakers jettisoned the last constitutional obstacle — age limits — on a possible life presidency.



	<p>“I grew up when he was president. Even my children have been born when he is president,” taxi driver Mark Wasswa said as voting began. “We also want to see another person now.”</p> <p>The rise of Wine as a national leader without ties to the regime has raised the stakes within the ruling National Resistance Movement party.</p> <p>“(Ruling) party members and supporters ought to know that this is a watershed election to shape, determine and install a Museveni successor,” government spokesman Ofwono Opondo recently wrote in the Sunday Vision newspaper.</p> <p>The African Union and East African bloc have deployed election observer missions but the European Union said “an offer to deploy a small team of electoral experts was not taken up. The role of local observers will be even more important than before.”</p> <p>The EU, U.N. and others have warned Uganda's security forces against using excessive force.</p> <p>Ugandan elections are often marred by allegations of fraud and alleged abuses by the security forces. The country has never witnessed a peaceful handover of power since independence from Britain in 1962.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 No officers to be charged in Blake shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/abc-news-exclusive-jacob-blake-recalls-limp-shot/story?id=75200628">https://abcnews.go.com/US/abc-news-exclusive-jacob-blake-recalls-limp-shot/story?id=75200628</a>
GIST	<p>Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old father, said he "kinda went limp" when he was shot seven times by a Wisconsin police officer and was left partially paralyzed.</p> <p>Two of Blake's children witnessed the Aug. 23, 2020, shooting, he said.</p> <p>"All I remember at that point was kinda leanin' back, lookin' at my boys," Blake told "Good Morning America" co-anchor Michael Strahan in an exclusive interview. "I said, 'Daddy, love you no matter what.' It was the last thing I said to them at that point."</p> <p>"I thought it was gonna be the last thing I say to them," added Blake. "Thank God it wasn't."</p> <p>Kenosha County District Attorney Mike Graveley announced last week that <a href="#">no police officers will be charged in the shooting</a>.</p> <p>Graveley said Kenosha police officer Rusten Sheskey, who is white, was justified in his use of force because Blake, who is Black, was armed with a knife, refused orders to drop it and made a motion as if he was going to stab Sheskey.</p> <p>Graveley said evidence showed Sheskey fired in self-defense.</p> <p>Graveley also said Blake admitted to investigators that he was armed with a knife throughout the entire encounter.</p> <p>Graveley said Sheskey stopped shooting when he saw Blake was no longer a threat and immediately started giving first aid. Graveley said there were 10 bullets left in Sheskey's gun.</p> <p>Sheskey was placed on administrative leave.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/13 Puget Sound ESD hit in data breach
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/puget-sound-educational-service-district-reports-data-breach">https://www.q13fox.com/news/puget-sound-educational-service-district-reports-data-breach</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSED) sent out a notice to current and former students and employees of King and Pierce County Schools upon learning of a data breach within their computer network.</p> <p>"Some types of personal information leading to our employees and potentially students could have been impacted. We're still working to determine the full nature and scope of that," said Jessica de Barros, PSED Executive Director of Communications, Government and Public Relations.</p> <p>In a press release sent out on Tuesday, further investigation found that certain employee emails were hacked between April 5 and Aug. 6 of 2020.</p> <p>It's unclear what specific information was hacked, but PSED officials said it could potentially be employees and/or students' names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, financial account information, and high-level medical information.</p> <p>"We had no reports that information was misused, but we are providing individuals notice through this press release out of an abundance of caution and diligence," said de Barros.</p> <p>It remains unclear the method used by hackers in this case. However, according to cybersecurity experts, most data breaches occur in unsuspecting emails or outside links. And while hacking an educational entity isn't like hacking into a bank, the information gained is still valuable.</p> <p>"It doesn't matter if you're Joe's Body Shop or King County School District, it doesn't matter," said Tim Mason, a cybersecurity faculty member at Green River College in Auburn. "If I can get your Social Security Number, your address, information like that, maybe I can open up an account at a bank someplace and get a mortgage on a home."</p> <p>Mason, who is also a Certified Ethical Hacker, said protecting yourself comes down to practical steps. He said one step is to keep a vigilant eye on emails and email attachments.</p> <p>According to Mason, many times hackers will send phishing malware in emails pretending to be someone you know. He said to look out for anything unusual or perhaps misspellings.</p> <p>"You also want to notify your IT department. And this goes for students too," said Mason.</p> <p>Other practical advice includes updating your anti-virus software, constantly checking your bank account and credit reports, and not using the same passwords.</p> <p>"We really need to pay attention to these things because it's easy to forget. Do we need to do this, yes we do," said Mason.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/13 Attacks on healthcare sector jump 51%
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/healthcare-187m-monthly-web-app/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/healthcare-187m-monthly-web-app/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Web application attacks in the healthcare sector surged in December as distribution of the first COVID-19 vaccines began, according to new data from <a href="#">Imperva</a>.</p> <p>The security vendor claimed that attacks jumped 51% last month from detected volumes in November in a vertical that has been bombarded by cyber-criminals over the past year.</p>

Four specific attack types saw the largest increases: cross-site scripting (XSS) detections jumped 43%; SQL injection attacks surged 44%; protocol manipulation attacks soared 76%; and remote code execution/remote file inclusion detections increased 68% in December.

XSS and SQLi attacks represented the number one and two threats detected by volume.

Imperva SVP Terry Ray claimed it had been an “unprecedented year” of cyber activity, with global healthcare organizations (HCOs) experiencing 187 million attacks per month on average. That amounts to nearly 500 attacks per HCO each month — a 10% increase year-on-year.

The US, Brazil, UK and Canada were the top countries targeted last year.

Like organizations in many sectors, HCOs have been looking to digital transformation to help them survive and adapt through an extraordinary year. However, their reliance on third-party applications to save time and money may also have exposed them, according to Ray.

“While there are sometimes business advantages to third-party applications, the risks include: patching only on the vendor’s timeline, known exploits that are widely publicized and constant zero-day research on widely used third-party tools and APIs,” he argued.

“Reliance on JavaScript APIs and third-party applications creates a threat landscape of more complex, automated, and opportunistic cybersecurity risks that are increasingly challenging for all organizations to detect and stop. And while ransomware attacks commonly land healthcare organizations in the news, it’s only the vulnerable application front-end to all healthcare data that experiences the variety and volume of daily attacks noted above.”

[Ray also warned](#) that many organizations may have a nasty surprise waiting for them as they start 2021, when the impact of December attacks start to become clear. HCOs’ focus in 2020 on supporting remote working and coping with the surge in COVID patients means less time may have been spent on incident response, he added.

In just the first three days of 2021, Imperva saw a 43% increase in data leakage.

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HEADLINE	01/13 APT35 behind Christmas phish campaign
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/iranian-cyberspies-behind-major-christmas-sms-spear-phishing-campaign/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.zdnet.com/article/iranian-cyberspies-behind-major-christmas-sms-spear-phishing-campaign/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>An Iranian cyber-espionage group known as <a href="#">Charming Kitten</a> (APT35 or Phosphorus) has used the recent winter holiday break to attack targets from all over the world using a very sophisticated spear-phishing campaign that involved not only email attacks but also SMS messages.</p> <p>Today's security threats have expanded in scope and seriousness. There can now be millions -- or even billions -- of dollars at risk when information security isn't handled properly.</p> <p>"Charming Kitten has taken full advantage of this timing to execute its new campaign to maximum effect," <a href="#">said CERTFA</a>, a cybersecurity organization specialized in tracking Iranian operations.</p> <p>"The group started the new round of attacks at a time when most companies, offices, organizations, etc. were either closed or half-closed during Christmas holidays and, as a result, their technical support and IT departments were not able to immediately review, identify, and neutralize these cyber incidents," it added.</p> <p>CERTFA said it detected attacks targeting members of think tanks, political research centers, university professors, journalists, and environmental activists.</p>

The victims were located in countries around the Persian Gulf, Europe, and the US.

### HOW AN ATTACK UNFOLDED

CERTFA researchers said that this particular campaign exhibited an advanced degree of complexity. Victims received spear-phishing messages from the attackers not only via email but also via SMS, a channel that not many threat actors use on a regular basis.

While the SMS messages posed as Google security alerts, the emails leveraged previously hacked accounts and tried to play on the festive mood with holiday-related lures.

The common denominator in both campaigns was that Charming Kitten operators managed to successfully hide their attacks behind a legitimate Google URL of [https://www.google\[.\]com/url?q=https://script.google.com/xxxx](https://www.google[.]com/url?q=https://script.google.com/xxxx), which would have fooled even the most tech-savvy recipients.

But behind the hood, CERTFA said that the legitimate Google URL would end up bouncing the user through different websites and eventually bring him to a phishing page, where they'd be asked for login credentials for personal email services like Gmail, Yahoo, and Outlook, but also business emails.

The CERTFA team noted that this wasn't the first time that Charming Kitten managed to successfully hide links to spear-phishing websites behind Google URLs.

The company points to a [previous report from January 2020](#), exposing a Charming Kitten operation that abused [sites.google.com](#) links.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Seldom-seen Amazon unit Parler takedown
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/13/amazon-parler-takedown/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/13/amazon-parler-takedown/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A hate-filled rant on Parler about a <a href="#">Michelle Obama video</a> that criticized Donald Trump's record as president — repeatedly referring to the former first lady by the n-word — prompted Amazon to send a note in the fall to the social media company's chief policy officer.</p> <p>“Does Parler consider this type of content to violate your policies? If so, what actions does Parler plan to take and in what timeframe?” an Amazon executive wrote to Parler's Amy Peikoff on Nov. 17.</p> <p>Two days later, Peikoff replied that the post, “as hateful as it is,” isn't a violation of Parler's terms of service, according to filings in a lawsuit that seeks to reverse Amazon's decision over the weekend to <a href="#">suspend the social network</a> as a customer of its cloud-computing service, effectively silencing it.</p> <p>The ability of companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google to control what people see online is so potent, it is the <a href="#">subject of antitrust hearings</a>. YouTube <a href="#">suspended President Trump</a> from uploading new videos to his official account for at least a week late Tuesday. But the decision by Amazon to push Parler off its dominant cloud-computing service illustrates just how powerful its content-moderation capabilities are as well.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the White House Twitter account <a href="#">shared a video statement from Trump</a> in which he jabbed at the “unprecedented assault on free speech we have seen in recent days,” without naming companies such as Twitter, Facebook or Google that have taken actions against him.</p> <p>But the companies that provide the technical infrastructure that powers websites and services where people express opinions have vast power as well, though they rarely use it. They include little-known companies that register website domains for customers; so-called content delivery networks, which can boost the</p>

speed at which webpages load; and Internet service providers, which connect homes and businesses to the Web.

“We’ve been too narrow in thinking about speech on the Internet being about social media,” said Margaret O’Mara, a history professor at the University of Washington and the author of “The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America,” a chronicle of the tech industry.

Customer service company Zendesk and security firm Okta also dropped Parler as a customer, furthering its tumble off the Web.

“The last five days have been a demonstration of these companies’ remarkable market power,” O’Mara said.

That power led Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton on Wednesday to issue formal legal demands to Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Twitter, aiming to investigate their recent moves to ban President Trump and shut down Parler. Those companies announced a wave of enforcement actions to stop Trump and his supporters from inciting further violence after the deadly siege at the U.S Capitol last week.

The criticism that tech giants are silencing conservatives by Paxton, the recent target of a whistleblower complaint and fraud investigation, comes months after the Texas attorney general [huddled with Trump](#) at a private White House meeting about allegations anti-conservative bias on social-media sites. The president specifically [pressed Republican officials](#) to use their investigative powers to probe censorship charges, the Post reported at the time.

There are few companies that have more power on the Web than Amazon. Its Amazon Web Services is the dominant provider of cloud infrastructure services, which let customers rent data storage and processing capabilities over the Web instead of running their own data centers. AWS, which competes against Microsoft and Google, held [45 percent of the global market](#) in 2019, according to the market research firm Gartner.

But Amazon hasn’t often proactively policed the content of customers — which include Airbnb, Yelp and Netflix, among others. Rather, its Trust & Safety team, which has fewer than 100 workers, acts only on complaints received.

In its reply to Parler’s suit, Amazon said it received reports in mid-November that the social network was “hosting content threatening violence.” Amazon’s filing included emails its executives sent to Peikoff with dozens of examples of Parler users calling for violence, including killing Democrats, Republicans who haven’t supported Trump’s efforts to overturn the November election, members of the Black Lives Matter and antifa movements, professional athletes, tech executives, and even the police.

(Amazon redacted the names of its executives to protect their safety after “significant and repeated threats of physical violence against AWS, its facilities and its employees” when it suspended Parler, according to a legal filing.)

Parler took down all of the offensive content Amazon brought to its attention, the company claims in its filing.

“AWS knew its allegations contained in the letter it leaked to the press that Parler was not able to find and remove content that encouraged violence was false — because over the last few days Parler had removed everything AWS had brought to its attention and more,” Parler’s suit claims.

The small company accused Amazon of making it a “pariah,” and alleged that some of the same language contained in the posts was also available on Twitter.

	<p>Twitter, <a href="#">like Facebook</a>, employs <a href="#">a small army of content moderators</a>, paired with artificial intelligence technology, to seek out and remove posts that violate its terms of service. By contrast, Parler relied largely on a system of volunteer jurors to remove content deemed offensive.</p> <p>According to its filing, Amazon deemed that approach insufficient, and a breach of the <a href="#">acceptable use policy</a> for its customers that bars content that, among other restrictions, “may be harmful to others.” Parler’s chief executive told Amazon executives during a phone call this month that the company “had a backlog of 26,000 reports of content that violated its community standards and remained on its service,” the filing alleges.</p> <p>Rebuilding its service, which also suffered blows when <a href="#">Apple and Google removed Parler</a> from their app stores, will take significant time to work properly with another hosting service, the company claims in its suit. It accused Amazon of conspiring with Twitter to take the smaller competitor offline just as it was significantly gaining users in the wake of Twitter permanently banning Trump.</p> <p>“Worse than the timing is the result — Parler has tried to find alternative companies to host it and they have fallen through,” Parler claims in its filing. “It has no other options. Without AWS, Parler is finished as it has no way to get online.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 DOH text to speed up exposure notification</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/2450684/texts-state-doh-covid-exposure-notification/">https://mynorthwest.com/2450684/texts-state-doh-covid-exposure-notification/</a>
GIST	<p>Starting this week, the Washington State Department of Health will be texting a verification code to every person in the state who tests positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>The state hopes the new system will lead to faster notification for people who have been exposed to COVID-19. Currently, the verification code is provided by public health during the case investigation process, but texting it within 24 hours after the state receives the result should make the notification process faster.</p> <p>People who test positive for COVID-19 will still receive notification from their health care provider or a testing facility. In addition, everyone who tests positive will now also receive a text from the state DOH. The text will include a link to activate a verification code in <a href="#">WA Notify</a>, which will then anonymously alert users who may have been exposed.</p> <p>“Adoption of exposure notification technology has been strong in Washington state, so I’m pleased we’re able to make this improvement to get verification codes to WA Notify users faster,” said Lacy Fahrenbach, deputy secretary for COVID-19 response. “The earlier someone is notified of a possible exposure, the more quickly they can take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and potentially save lives.”</p> <p>The text from the DOH will also include a link to help you activate WA Notify if you have not done so already. If you aren’t using WA Notify, you can disregard the message.</p> <p>According to a release from the state DOH, nearly 1.66 million people have activated WA Notify since Nov. 30, 2020. WA Notify is available in more than 29 languages. It uses privacy-preserving technology developed by Google and Apple and “works without collecting or revealing any location or personal data.” Users are able to opt out at any time.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Zello, walkie-talkie app, hosted militias</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/zello-app-us-capitol-attack-far-right">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/13/zello-app-us-capitol-attack-far-right</a>



Audio and chat logs reveal that at least two insurrectionists who broke into the Capitol on 6 January used Zello, a social media walkie-talkie app that critics say has largely ignored a growing far-right user base.

“We are in the main dome right now,” said a female militia member, speaking on Zello, her voice competing with the cacophony of a clash with Capitol police. “We are rocking it. They’re throwing grenades, they’re frickin’ shooting people with paintballs, but we’re in here.”

“God bless and godspeed. Keep going,” said a male voice from a quiet environment.

“Jess, do your shit,” said another. “This is what we fucking lived up for. Everything we fucking trained for.”

The frenzied exchange took place at 2.44pm in a public Zello channel called “STOP THE STEAL J6”, where Trump supporters at home and in Washington DC discussed the riot as it unfolded. Dynamic group conversations like this exemplify why Zello, a smartphone and PC app, has become popular among militias, which have long fetishized military-like communication on analog radio.

After years of public pressure, Facebook, Twitter, and Discord have begun to crack down on inciting speech from far-right groups, but Zello has avoided proactive content moderation thus far.

Most coverage about Zello, which claims to have 150 million users on its free and premium platforms, has focused on its use by the Cajun Navy groups that send boats to save flood victims and grassroots organizing in Venezuela. However, the app is also home to hundreds of far-right channels, which appear to violate its policy prohibiting groups that espouse “violent ideologies”.

Responding to a list of over 800 far-right channels, Zello said it was “prepared to take action on those”. The company also said it was working on a more elaborate response. In addition to locking some public features that would help researchers uncover more extremist content, Zello had begun purging some far-right groups as of Wednesday.

Two hours after the Guardian published this report, Zello announced it had deleted more than 2,000 “channels associated with militias and other militarized social movements”.

“It is with deep sadness and anger that we have discovered evidence of Zello being misused by some individuals while storming the United States Capitol building last week,” the company wrote in a blog post. “Looking ahead, we are concerned that Zello could be misused by groups who have threatened to organize additional potentially violent protests and disrupt the US presidential inauguration festivities on January 20th.”

The Zello user who described breaking into the Capitol building appears to be Jessica Watkins, a 38-year-old bartender from Ohio, who [admitted](#) to participating in the insurrection. Watkins told [the Ohio Capital Journal](#) she was the leader of a local militia called the Ohio State Regular and a member of the national Oath Keepers militia.

The username of the Zello profile in question, “OhioRegularsActual – Oathkeeper”, matches Watkins’s militia affiliations, referencing the Ohio State Regulars, Oath Keepers, and her role as a militia leader through the inclusion of “Actual” in her virtual “radio callsign”.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Oath Keepers are “one of the largest radical anti-government groups in the US today”, claiming to have tens of thousands of current and former law enforcement and military personnel in its ranks.

The user’s Zello messages also bear strong resemblance to posts on Watkin’s Parler profile, according to our research: “Yeah. We stormed the Capitol today. Teargassed, the whole, 9,” she wrote on Parler. “Pushed our way into the rotunda. Made it into the Senate even.”



Watkins, who could not be reached for comment, told the Journal that she did not believe she had done anything wrong.

Parler shut down this week after Amazon Web Services stopped hosting the platform because so many of its users had called for the insurrection. The woman's profile was one of thousands uploaded to the Wayback Machine, an internet archive, by a group of hackers following the violence in Washington DC.

"We have a good group: 30 to 40 of us. We're sticking together and sticking to the plan," the female voice is heard saying on Zello as they were walking toward the Capitol. "The police are doing nothing. They're not even trying to stop us."

The Ohio Capital Journal also identified Watkins as one of a line of Oath Keepers pushing their way through the crowd on the steps of the Capitol toward the east entrance of the building. She [can be seen](#) toward the back of the line in livestream footage taken at the deadly event wearing battle rattle. Moments later a stream of pro-Trump insurrectionists poured inside.

As she narrated her march toward and into the Capitol, others in the Zello channel cheered on the insurrection and called for the kidnapping of politicians.

"You are executing citizen's arrest," said "1% Watchdog", the creator of the channel, evoking the viral image of a man carrying zip ties in the Senate chamber. "We have probable cause: treason, acts of treason, election fraud, all kinds of felony crimes, no competent authority," he said, referencing claims of voter fraud that have been promoted by Donald Trump and other Republican lawmakers but repeatedly debunked by journalists and the courts.

### **Preparation and incitement**

Records from several other far-right Zello channels show that the app was a platform for organizing and feverish incitement in the days leading up to the deadly riot.

Speaking in a password-protected channel called "DC 3.0", a user named "AmericanRev2" described how Zello would fit into a communication plan featuring multiple apps: "Once we go operational, this channel will just be for intel gathering and organizing on the backside ... All information, once verified, will be put into the Telegram and then shared to boots on the ground from there."

The speaker's voice, username, and profile picture match other social media accounts used by Josh Ellis, the administrator of mymilitia.com, another hotbed of far-right organizing.

"DC 3.0" is one of at least five channels that were created specifically for the 6 January event. Organizing also took place in channels that have been active for years, including one run by the III% Security Force, a Georgia-based militia group.

"January 6th, revolution or bust," proclaimed Chris Hill on 29 December. Hill, the group's leader, has a long history of publicly preparing for civil war.

Unlike sites like 4chan and Gab, forums where posters use irony and memes to obfuscate violent calls-to-action, audio messages on Zello can convey more complex and direct emotions. "How about if all of us stand the fuck up, and take this shit back?" asked a militia member on 4 January.

"I got a problem with fucking patriots not growing a fucking set of goddamn nuts and standing the fuck up, and kicking bitches in the fucking teeth. And shooting motherfuckers in the fucking head." Then, catching himself, he tried to walk back the outburst. "I ain't talking about doing anything illegal ... I want y'all to know I love you ... I just wanted to incite enthusiasm."

### **Caravan to DC**

Meanwhile, some Zello communities devoted their chatrooms to coordinating travel to the DC event. A photo set as the profile picture of a password-protected channel called "The MAGA Cavalry" depicted

rendezvous points in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and South Carolina for drivers to meet and caravan together into the city.

So-called “Maga drag” or “Maga caravan” channels exploded in popularity on Zello last year, thanks in part to Trump’s encouragement on Twitter.

On 6 January, at least one member of The Maga Cavalry channel appears to have joined the Capitol break-in: “I was there, inside for a bit there, someone broke into the door and opened it,” said a man going by the username “Q”, probably a reference to QAnon, the conspiracy-theory group. “We had a right to be there. We pay for this house. It’s our house.” He described aimlessly roaming the halls of the building before police used teargas to expel the mob.

Without more information about the user, the authors of this article were unable to verify his claims or identity. Another user, named ArmyVet365247, in The Maga Cavalry channel made the man’s incriminating clip public by using the app’s share function, which automatically posts it to a feed on Zello’s site. The very low engagement on Q’s story suggests making the message public may have been an accident.

### **A pattern of neglect**

The revelation of Zello’s potential role in the Capitol riots comes just three months after a joint investigation from [On the Media and MilitiaWatch](#) revealed that the company’s leadership resisted calls to enforce its terms of service, which prohibit “violent extremist ideologies”, and remove far-right groups and users from the app.

“Zello simply cannot actively monitor millions of concurrent discussions,” the company told On the Media in October, responding to a list of more than 200 far-right channels, including those with names clearly referencing white supremacist and militia iconographies.

The piece referenced a leaked company-wide email from June, during a national reckoning on institutional racism, in which a Zello employee proposed a new slate of moderation practices to thwart future far-right activity on the app.

Zello ultimately banned some “boogaloo” and outright white nationalist groups and users. The company let militia channels stay up but made them harder to find by de-indexing them from search engines – a Google search for “militia Zello” no longer yields access to those groups – and blocking terms such as “Oath Keeper” from its in-app search function. That some of these groups still used the platform to organize for the 6 January insurrection suggests these changes were inadequate.

“Zello was completely unresponsive,” said Talia Lavin, an outspoken critic of platforms that host extremist speech and the author of [Culture Warlords](#). She led a [campaign on Twitter](#) in October to pressure the company to take more urgent action against Oath Keepers and other militias on the app. “They gave every indication of not caring at all about public opinion.”

Being slow to respond may threaten the future of Zello, which relies on servers from Amazon Web Services and access to the Google and Apple app stores. By booting Parler from their platforms, the three companies have demonstrated they may not tolerate companies hosting extremist content.

So far, that’s not true of Zello.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Millions flock to Telegram, Signal
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/technology/telegram-signal-apps-big-tech.html?action=click&amp;module=Top%20Stories&amp;pgtype=Homepage">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/technology/telegram-signal-apps-big-tech.html?action=click&amp;module=Top%20Stories&amp;pgtype=Homepage</a>

Neeraj Agrawal, a spokesman for a cryptocurrency think tank, has typically used the [encrypted messaging app Signal](#) to chat with privacy-minded colleagues and peers. So he was surprised on Monday when the app alerted him to two new users: Mom and Dad.

“Signal still had a subversive shine to it,” said Mr. Agrawal, 32. “Now my parents are on it.”

On Telegram, another encrypted messaging app, [Gavin McInnes](#), founder of the far-right Proud Boys group, had just announced his return. “Man, I haven’t posted here in a while,” he wrote on Sunday. “I’ll be posting regularly.”

And on Twitter, Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur, also weighed in last week with a two-word endorsement: “Use Signal.”

Over the past week, tens of millions of people have downloaded Signal and [Telegram](#), making them the two hottest apps in the world. Signal allows messages to be sent with “end-to-end encryption,” meaning no one but the sender and receiver can read its contents. Telegram offers some encrypted messaging options, but is largely popular for its group-based chat rooms where people can discuss a variety of subjects.

Their sudden jump in popularity was spurred by a series of events last week that stoked growing anxiety over some of the big tech companies and their communication apps, like WhatsApp, which Facebook owns. Tech companies including Facebook and Twitter removed thousands of far-right accounts — including [President Trump](#)’s — after the storming of the Capitol. Amazon, Apple and Google also [cut off support for Parler](#), a social network popular with Mr. Trump’s fans. In response, conservatives sought out new apps where they could communicate.

At the same time, privacy worries rose over WhatsApp, which last week reminded users [in a pop-up notification](#) that it shares some of their data with its parent company. The notification set off a wave of anxiety, fueled by viral chain messages that falsely claimed that Facebook could read WhatsApp messages.

The result was a mass migration that, if it lasts, could weaken the power of Facebook and other big tech companies. On Tuesday, Telegram said it added more than 25 million users over the previous three days, pushing it to over 500 million users. Signal added nearly 1.3 million users on Monday alone, after averaging just 50,000 downloads a day last year, according to estimates from Apptopia, an app-data firm.

“We’ve had surges of downloads before,” said Pavel Durov, Telegram’s chief executive, in a message on the app on Tuesday. “But this time is different.”

Carl Woog, a spokesman for WhatsApp, said that users’ privacy settings had not changed and that rumors about what data is shared were largely unfounded.

“What’s not changing is that private messages to friends and family, including group chats, will be protected by end-to-end encryption so that we cannot see them,” he said.

The rise of Telegram and Signal could inflame the [debate over encryption](#), which helps protect the privacy of people’s digital communications but can stymie the authorities in crime investigations because conversations are hidden.

Any move to the apps by far-right groups in particular has worried U.S. authorities, some of whom are trying to track the planning for what may become violent rallies on or ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. next week.

“The proliferation of the encrypted platforms, where law enforcement can’t even monitor the rhetoric, does allow groups that have an ill intent to plan behind the curtain,” said Louis Grever, head of the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies.

Telegram has been particularly popular for those on the far right because it mimics social media. So after Facebook and Twitter limited Mr. Trump on their services last week and other companies began pulling their support from Parler, far-right groups on Parler and other fringe social networks posted links to new Telegram channels and urged people to join them there.

In the four hours after Parler went offline on Monday, one Proud Boys group on Telegram gained over 4,000 new followers.

“Don’t trust Big tech,” read a message on one Proud Boys group on Parler. “We will need to find safer spaces.”

On Signal, a Florida-based militia group said on Monday that it was organizing its chats in small, city-by-city groups limited to a few dozen people each, according to messages seen by The New York Times.

They warned one another not to let in anyone they did not personally know, to avoid law enforcement officials spying on their chats.

The flood of users to Telegram, which is based in Dubai, and Signal, which is based in Silicon Valley, goes far beyond just the American far right. Mr. Durov said that 94 percent of Telegram’s 25 million new users came from Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa.

Most of Signal’s new user adoption is coming from outside the United States. As of Wednesday, the company said it was the No. 1 app in 70 countries on iOS devices and in 45 countries on Android devices, with India being one of the biggest areas of new user growth. For both Signal and Telegram, new installations came from users in Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil and dozens of other countries, data from Apptopia shows.

Fears over WhatsApp’s privacy policies have driven Telegram and Signal’s popularity. While there was [no meaningful change to how WhatsApp handles users’ data](#), people immediately interpreted the app’s privacy notification last week to mean that it was infiltrating all kinds of personal information — like personal chat logs and voice calls — and sharing that data with businesses.

WhatsApp quickly said people were mistaken and that it could not see anything inside of encrypted chats and calls. But it was too late.

“The whole world now seems to understand that Facebook is not building apps for them, Facebook is building apps for their data,” said Moxie Marlinspike, the founder and chief executive of Signal. “It took this one small catalyst to push everyone over the edge of making a change.”

The fervor has been such that on Tuesday, Moses Tsali, a Los Angeles rapper, released a music video for his song, “Hit Me On Signal.” And Mr. Musk’s endorsement of Signal last week sent publicly traded shares of Signal Advance Inc., a small medical device maker, soaring from a

roughly \$50 million market value to more than \$3 billion. (The company has no relation to the messaging app.)

Some world leaders have also urged people to join them on the apps. On Sunday, the Twitter account of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico talked about his new group on Telegram. By Wednesday, it had nearly 100,000 members.

Eli Sapis, Apptopia's chief executive, said that while people's concerns over Facebook's data collection were fair, WhatsApp actually uses more secure encryption than Telegram. "It's like going from something high in sugar to corn syrup," he said, adding that Signal was the most secure of the three.

Meyi Alabi, 18, a student in Ibadan, Nigeria, said she was surprised this week when her mother invited her to join Signal. Her mother had downloaded the app upon urging from a friend worried about WhatsApp.

"I was in shock because she got it before me," she said. "We usually tell our parents about the new apps. Now all of a sudden we're the ones getting informed."

Mr. Agrawal, the cryptocurrency worker, said his parents had long been active in several WhatsApp group chats with college friends and relatives back in India. He said they told him they joined Signal to follow many of those chats that were moving there, because some of the participants were worried about WhatsApp's new policy.

He said he knew the dangers of the WhatsApp policy were overstated but that much of the public doesn't understand how their data is being handled.

"They hear those key things — data sharing, Facebook, privacy," Mr. Agrawal said, "and that's enough for them to say, I got to get off this."

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HEADLINE	01/13 FBI aims for stronger cyber strategy
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/fbi-cyber-strategy-solar-winds-matt-gorham/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/fbi-cyber-strategy-solar-winds-matt-gorham/</a>
GIST	<p>While dealing with a massive cyber-espionage campaign against the U.S. government, the FBI is trying to quietly implement a new strategy aimed at better tracking foreign hackers.</p> <p>FBI officials last spring gave the head of the National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force (NCIJTF) — a group of intelligence, law enforcement and defense officials who track hacking threats — a more senior role within the bureau, according to Tonya Ugoretz, deputy assistant director in <a href="#">the FBI's cyber division</a>.</p> <p>The result is that a senior FBI official now leads an interagency group whose work could lead to offensive cyber-operations, sanctions or State Department démarches — or all three. Herb Stapleton, the former head of the FBI's the head of FBI's Cyber Crime Operations, is filling that role.</p> <p>The goal of the strategy, which the <a href="#">FBI unveiled in September</a>, is to disrupt foreign cyber operations against U.S. assets by "changing the risk calculus" of adversaries, as Ugoretz put it. FBI officials have <a href="#">set up "mission centers"</a> within the bureau to focus resources on "the top nation-state [cyber] adversaries," along with ransomware gangs, she said. A senior NCIJTF official from a different intelligence or defense agency leads each "mission center" so that threat data can be shared more easily, she said.</p> <p>The update comes at a humbling moment for cybersecurity personnel at the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. intelligence agencies.</p>

A long-running alleged Russian hacking operation has used tainted software made by contractor [SolarWinds](#), a federal contractor, to infiltrate multiple federal agencies, including the [departments of Justice](#) and Treasury, and the [U.S. federal court system](#).

The espionage campaign has exposed glaring weaknesses in American defenses while also affecting corporate America, and will likely take months to clean up. It seems to represent the kind of activity the FBI's cyber efforts would aim to mitigate.

Ugoretz declined to comment on the details of the SolarWinds hacking campaign, but she did say it underscored the importance of the strategy.

“We can use our law enforcement and intelligence authorities both to support those defending networks and conducting offensive activities, and to attribute the activity and [hold] nefarious actors accountable, leading to greater deterrence,” she said.

The new FBI approach to disrupting adversaries will mean training personnel who, in the course of investigating an intrusion, know which pieces of data might be useful to U.S. intelligence agencies considering offensive cyber-operations, for example. It could also mean expanding the number of cyber-focused personnel the bureau has at U.S. embassies.

There are other changes in cybersecurity personnel afoot at the FBI. Matt Gorham, the most senior cybersecurity official at the FBI, plans to retire on Feb. 5. Gorham's retirement was not a surprise, a bureau official said, as he was eligible for retirement after spending 25 years at the bureau. The FBI has yet to name a replacement for Gorham.

#### **‘Understanding the totality of the activity’**

Cyber-espionage is inevitable, but the FBI and other U.S. agencies try to make it harder for spies to successfully exploit — and therefore undermine trust in — large segments of the software supply chain on which major U.S. corporations rely. The FBI was implementing its strategy as the suspected Russian spies were lurking in federal agency networks over the last several months.

The FBI began putting key pieces of the strategy in place in the spring of 2020, months after the suspected Russian hackers had begun tampering with SolarWinds software.

For the FBI and U.S. intelligence agencies, the espionage campaign is a case study in the tradecraft and ambitions of state-backed hackers. It is important for the bureau to understand an attacker's intent in these types of complex hacking incidents, Ugoretz said.

“It's not just about, for FBI, responding to a specific intrusion but understanding how the totality of the activity supports what the adversary is trying to achieve,” she said.

The FBI, along with the Department of Homeland Security and intelligence agencies, said in [a Jan. 5 statement](#) that the SolarWinds espionage operation was “likely Russian in origin.” Ugoretz would not comment further on the attribution of the SolarWinds campaign, citing an ongoing investigation. But she pointed to recent cases of U.S. officials [attributing election interference activity to Iran](#) as examples of “what we're trying to achieve through our strategy” to support “rapid attribution” of cyber activity.

As for the strategy itself, Ugoretz said it will live on in the Biden administration.

“It is the FBI cyber strategy...which transcends any individual or group leadership team that's in place at any one time,” she said.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/new-zealand-central-bank-says-accellion-service-heart-cyberattack">https://www.securityweek.com/new-zealand-central-bank-says-accellion-service-heart-cyberattack</a>
GIST	<p>The Reserve Bank of New Zealand – Te Pūtea Matua – says Accellion’s FTA (File Transfer Application) file sharing service was involved in a security incident disclosed on Sunday.</p> <p>The <a href="#">malicious incident</a>, the bank said, involved a service that stored commercially and personally sensitive information, but could not provide specific details on the type of data that might have been accessed.</p> <p>On Monday, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand revealed that it uses Accellion’s FTA service for the sharing of information with external stakeholders. The incident, the bank said, was contained, the system taken offline, and an investigation launched into the matter.</p> <p>“We are actively working with domestic and international cyber security experts and other relevant authorities as part of our investigation. This includes the GCSB’s National Cyber Security Centre which has been notified and is providing guidance and advice,” the bank's governor, Adrian Orr, <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>The root cause of the incident appears to be a <a href="#">critical vulnerability in FTA</a> that Accellion identified in mid-December, and which was immediately addressed.</p> <p>The Palo Alto, California-based company, which provides cloud solutions aiming to secure file sharing and collaboration, said a patch for the security bug was sent to all of the affected customers (less than 50 in total) within 72 hours after disclosure.</p> <p>Accellion also underlines that FTA is a legacy product, and encourages customers to upgrade to the Kiteworks enterprise content firewall platform.</p> <p>“While Accellion maintains tight security standards for its legacy FTA product, we strongly encourage our customers to update to kiteworks, the modern enterprise content firewall platform, for the highest level of security and confidence,” the company said.</p> <p>The Reserve Bank noted that Accellion informed them that the disclosed security incident did not appear to target the bank specifically, and that other customers of the FTA file sharing service were affected as well.</p> <p>The bank would not provide additional information on the incident at the moment, as this “could adversely affect the investigation and the steps being taken to mitigate the breach,” but says its services remain functional.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 #Covid19 led to surge in malware attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/covid-surge-malware-attacks/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/covid-surge-malware-attacks/</a>
GIST	<p>Malware authors continued to successfully leverage the COVID-19 pandemic last year to launch a wide variety of attacks, according to the <a href="#">2020 Avira Report on Cybersecurity</a>.</p> <p>The cybersecurity firm detected that cyber-attacks went up by 15% last year compared to 2019, observing that the rate of scams rose and fell at the same rate and time as the virus appeared across the world. The peak rate of blocked attempts was in April, during the first wave of the pandemic.</p> <p>As COVID-19 cases rose again in the final quarter of 2020, malware attacks correspondingly went up rapidly, with a correlation found between the number of attacks launched and the number of people working from home.</p> <p>One major tactic utilized has been the development of special variants of well-known malware families that use COVID-19 lures to entice unsuspecting users to install them on their devices. An example</p>



	<p>highlighted in the study was a variant of the Android banking Trojan ‘Cerberus,’ which in many cases was distributed via phishing messages under the name ‘Corona-App.apk.’ The total number of Android banking Trojans detected in 2020 went up by 35% year-on-year, which the authors partially attributed to increasing use of mobile banking during the pandemic.</p> <p>Looking ahead to the coming year, Avira said it expects stalkerware to become increasingly prevalent. This form of spyware, which can be installed without the knowledge or consent of the device owner, secretly monitors users and spies on personal information such as pictures, videos, messages and location data. A stealth mode enables the app to hide itself while in use.</p> <p>Alexander Vukcevic, director of Avira Protection Labs, commented: “For many years, authors of malware have been using psychological tricks to lure unsuspecting users. Currently, we are in a situation where many people are looking for answers and are worried because of COVID-19. The authors of malware are specifically exploiting this uncertainty.”</p> <p>He added: “Banking Trojans have always played an important role in the Android malware scene and this year they had an even bigger presence. In addition to the strategy of using COVID-19 as a cover, they also use the classic approach: they disguise themselves as a widely used app and ask for unusual permissions in order to obtain credit card data, for example.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 CISA warns: cloud attacks; poor hygiene</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cisa-warns-of-cloud-attacks-poor/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cisa-warns-of-cloud-attacks-poor/</a>
GIST	<p>A US cybersecurity agency is urging organizations to improve their cyber-hygiene after warning of multiple successful attacks targeting cloud services used by remote workers.</p> <p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) revealed in a report yesterday that attackers are increasingly targeting corporate and personal laptops with phishing, brute force login attempts and possibly a “pass-the-cookie” attack to access cloud accounts.</p> <p>Although these attacks were not tied back to a single threat actor, they shared many of the same tactics. Some attackers spoofed file hosting services and other legitimate vendors in phishing emails to harvest log-ins, before using these hijacked accounts to phish others in the organization.</p> <p>In some attacks, account hijackers modified forwarding and keyword search rules. This is often done by BEC attackers looking to monitor email conversations with suppliers, and to hide phishing warnings. In one example, a VPN server was configured with port 80 open for remote worker access, so cyber-criminals targeted it with brute force log-in attempts.</p> <p>Although multi-factor authentication (MFA) thwarted some attempts to brute force accounts, in one case threat actors are believed to have used browser cookies to defeat MFA with a “pass-the-cookie” <a href="#">attack</a>.</p> <p>CISA was at pains to point out that none of this activity is related to the recent SolarWinds supply chain attack believed to have been carried out by sophisticated Russian state actors.</p> <p>However, these attacks have certainly become widespread enough to warrant intervention by the agency. It offered a <a href="#">long list of recommendations</a> for organizations to improve their cyber-hygiene and strengthen cloud security practices.</p> <p>Alongside conditional access (CA) policies, MFA, restrictions on email forwarding, user training, secure privileged access and zero trust, CISA argued that remote employees should not use personal devices for work. At the very least, mobile device management tools should be used to mitigate risk, it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/14 Windows 10 bug corrupts hard drive
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/windows-10-bug-corrupts-your-hard-drive-on-seeing-this-files-icon/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/windows-10-bug-corrupts-your-hard-drive-on-seeing-this-files-icon/</a>
GIST	<p>An unpatched zero-day in Microsoft Windows 10 allows attackers to corrupt an NTFS-formatted hard drive with a one-line command.</p> <p>In multiple tests by <i>BleepingComputer</i>, this one-liner can be delivered hidden inside a Windows shortcut file, a ZIP archive, batch files, or various other vectors to trigger hard drive errors that corrupt the filesystem index instantly.</p> <p><b>"Critically underestimated" NTFS vulnerability</b>  In August 2020, October 2020, and finally this week, infosec researcher <a href="#">Jonas L</a> drew attention to an NTFS vulnerability impacting Windows 10 that has not been fixed.</p> <p>When exploited, this vulnerability can be triggered by a single-line command to instantly corrupt an NTFS-formatted hard drive, with Windows prompting the user to restart their computer to repair the corrupted disk records.</p> <p>The researcher told BleepingComputer that the flaw became exploitable starting around Windows 10 build 1803, the Windows 10 April 2018 Update, and continues to work in the latest version.</p> <p>What's worse is, the vulnerability can be triggered by standard and low privileged user accounts on Windows 10 systems.</p> <p>A drive can become corrupted by merely trying to access the \$i30 NTFS attribute on a folder in a certain way.</p> <p><b>*WARNING*</b> Executing the below command on a live system will corrupt the drive and possibly make it inaccessible. <b>ONLY</b> test this command in a virtual machine that you can restore to an earlier snapshot if the drive becomes corrupted. <b>*WARNING*</b></p> <p>An example command that corrupts a drive is shown below.</p> <pre>cd c:\:\$i30:\$bitmap</pre> <p>The Windows NTFS Index Attribute, or '\$i30' string, is an NTFS attribute associated with directories that contains a list of a directory's files and subfolders. In some cases, the <a href="#">NTFS Index can also include deleted files and folders</a>, which comes in handy when conducting an incident response or forensics.</p> <p>It is unclear why accessing this attribute corrupts the drive, and Jonas told BleepingComputer that a Registry key that would help diagnose the issue doesn't work.</p> <p>'I have no idea why it corrupts stuff and it would be a lot of work to find out because the reg key that should BSOD on corruption does not work. So, I'll leave it to the people with the source code,' Jonas told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>After running the command in the Windows 10 command prompt and hitting Enter, the user will see an error message stating, "The file or directory is corrupted and unreadable."</p> <p>Windows 10 will immediately begin displaying notifications prompting the user to restart their PC and repair the corrupted disk volume. On reboot, the Windows check disk utility runs and starts repairing the hard drive</p> <p>After the drives become corrupted, Windows 10 will generate errors in the Event Log stating that the Master File Table (MFT) for the particular drive contains a corrupted record.</p>

BleepingComputer's tests also show that you can use this command on any drive, not only the C: drive and that drive will subsequently become corrupted.

### **More sophisticated ways to exploit the zero-day**

In tests conducted by BleepingComputer, threat actors can use the command maliciously in various PoC exploits.

One striking finding shared by Jonas with us was that a crafted Windows shortcut file (.url) that had its *icon* location set to *C:\::\$i30:\$bitmap* would trigger the vulnerability **even if the user never opened the file!**

As observed by BleepingComputer, as soon as this shortcut file is downloaded on a Windows 10 PC, and the user views the folder it is present in, Windows Explorer will attempt to display the file's icon.

To do this, Windows Explorer would attempt to access the crafted icon path inside the file in the background, thereby corrupting the NTFS hard drive in the process.

Next, "restart to repair hard drive" notifications start popping up on the Windows PC—all this without the user even having opened or double-clicked on the shortcut file.

### **Delivering payload via ZIP archives, HTML files, and various means**

Creative attackers can also deliver this payload in a variety of ways to the victim.

While the same-origin policy on most browsers would limit such attacks being served from a remote server (e.g., a remote HTML document referencing *file:///C:\::\$i30:\$bitmap*), creative means exist to work around such restrictions.

The researcher [briefly stated](#) that other vectors could be used to trigger this exploit remotely, such as via crafted HTML pages that embed resources from network shares or shared drives that have references to the offending *\$i30* path.

In some cases, according to the researcher, it is possible to corrupt the [NTFS Master File Table \(MFT\)](#). During our research, BleepingComputer came across a caveat.

In *some* tests, after the Windows 10 chkdsk utility had "repaired" the hard drive errors on reboot, the contents of the exploit file, in this case, the crafted Windows shortcut with its icon set to *C:\::\$i30:\$bitmap* would be cleared and replaced with empty bytes.

This means the crafted Windows shortcut file was enough to pull a one-off attack if this happens.

Besides, a victim is not likely to download a Windows shortcut (.url) file from the internet.

To make the attack more realistic and persistent, attackers could trick users into downloading a ZIP archive to deliver the crafted file.

An attacker can, for example, sneak in their malicious Windows shortcut file with a large number of legitimate files inside a ZIP archive.

Not only is a user more likely to download a ZIP file, but the ZIP file is likely to trigger the exploit every single time it is extracted.

This is because the compressed (and possibly encrypted) contents of the ZIP file, including the Windows shortcut, would not trigger the exploit unless extracted.

	<p>And even when extracted, the hard drive repairing process would empty the extracted Windows shortcut file without touching the compressed copy present inside the ZIP archive until the user attempts to re-extract the ZIP.</p> <p>According to sources in the infosec community, serious vulnerabilities like these have been known for years and reported to Microsoft earlier but remain unpatched.</p> <p>BleepingComputer reached out to Microsoft to learn if they knew of the bug already and if they would fix the bug.</p> <p>“Microsoft has a customer commitment to investigate reported security issues and we will provide updates for impacted devices as soon as possible,” a Microsoft spokesperson told BleepingComputer.</p>
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/13 FBI D.C. field office ‘failing grade’ in audit
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/fbi-washington-field-office-got-f-fighting-domestic-terrorism-bureau-n1254157">https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/fbi-washington-field-office-got-f-fighting-domestic-terrorism-bureau-n1254157</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — FBI inspectors who evaluated the domestic terrorism program in the bureau's Washington field office two years ago gave it a "failing grade," meaning it was considered both ineffective and inefficient, two former <a href="#">FBI</a> officials familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>The inspection — akin to an internal audit — found that mechanisms to collect, analyze and share threat intelligence were lacking, the same factors that appear to have played roles in the security failure that led to the U.S. Capitol's being overrun by domestic extremists Jan. 6, the former officials said.</p> <p>"It wasn't being worked fully, in short," said one of the former <a href="#">FBI</a> officials, who was there at the time.</p> <p>"They didn't have [enough] intelligence analysts assigned, and the ones who had been assigned in the past weren't doing intel work," the former official said. "They had few sources or understanding of the threat in their area of responsibility."</p> <p>The second former official, who was directly involved, said the evaluation also criticized the Washington field office's procedures for sharing intelligence with other police agencies, including the U.S. Capitol Police. Capitol Police said they had <a href="#">no intelligence from the FBI</a> about possible threats before the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, in which a pro-Trump mob overwhelmed the agency's officers and one officer died.</p> <p>Washington is considered the top domestic terrorism target in the country, and the FBI's Inspection Division sent a team to evaluate how the D.C. field office's domestic terrorism programs were working. FBI inspection reports are generally not made public.</p> <p>The inspectors examined the office files to determine the number and quality of the office's human sources in domestic terrorism and the intelligence papers the analysts were writing, the first former official said.</p>

A third former FBI official briefed about the matter said: "They saw a big need for improvement. They were uncomfortable with the iconic target city not having the best mechanisms to collect on and counter the threat. They found problems with how they interact with the other agencies, specifically the Capitol Police."

Samantha Shero, a spokeswoman for the FBI's Washington field office, told NBC News after this article was first published that the inspection that resulted in a failing grade took place for 18 months during 2017 and most of 2018.

In two separate reviews since then, she said, the office's grades have improved, and they are now at the highest level. She acknowledged that the reviews were not inspections, which are the most rigorous evaluation the FBI conducts of its operations.

"Recommendations were made, and changes were implemented," she said.

The sources said the failed inspection was not necessarily due to incompetence or bad management — there was a larger context. Domestic terrorism was ranked as a low priority in the FBI compared to international terrorism, the former official said, which meant it did not always attract the most aggressive agents.

The second former FBI official said one complicating factor was the large number of threats made on social media and in other forms on a near-daily basis against federal government targets in Washington and the difficulty in sorting out what is real from what is simply aspirational.

Investigating domestic terrorism has been a challenge across the bureau. A fourth source, a former FBI official who worked in a senior role on domestic terrorism, spoke of ongoing frustration, because agents felt hamstrung by FBI lawyers who worried that an investigation or an intelligence collection bumped up against protected free speech.

[NBC News reported Sunday](#) that, according to law enforcement sources briefed about the matter, the FBI and the New York Police Department shared some threat information with the Capitol Police in the days before the riot.

But NBC News also reported Tuesday that the [FBI did not issue a comprehensive intelligence bulletin](#) sharing everything its intelligence analysts had gathered about extremist postings on social media threatening violence. That did not happen because some FBI officials were concerned that issuing such a bulletin would run afoul of First Amendment protections for political speech — a view not everyone within the FBI agreed with, sources familiar with the matter said.

The acting assistant chief of the Capitol Police told Congress on Tuesday that [he was not aware](#) of any intelligence from the FBI before Jan. 6.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Minnesota man pleads guilty; joined ISIS
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-man-who-trained-with-islamic-state-pleads-guilty/600010205/">https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-man-who-trained-with-islamic-state-pleads-guilty/600010205/</a>
GIST	MINNEAPOLIS — A Minnesota man who traveled to Syria and Iraq where prosecutors say he became a soldier for the Islamic State group pleaded guilty on Wednesday to a terrorism count.

Abdelhamid Al-Madioum, 24, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court of Minnesota to one count of providing and attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization.

According to his plea agreement and court documents, Al-Madioum left his family while they were visiting extended relatives in Morocco in 2015 and went to Istanbul, Turkey, where members of the Islamic State group helped him cross into Syria. Once in Syria, he joined other members of IS, who brought him to Mosul, Iraq, where he enrolled as a member of the group and began receiving military training.

Al-Madioum admitted in his guilty plea that he was assigned to a battalion that was responsible for training and preparing foreign fighters to carry out suicide attacks in Europe.

He admitted he was a soldier until he was injured while conducting military activities for the group. After his injury, he continued to receive payments from IS; he surrendered to Syrian Democratic Forces in March 2019, according to the plea agreement.

Al-Madioum was in Syrian custody for more than a year, and was returned to Minnesota last September to face charges.

While in prison in Syria, Al-Madioum told FBI agents that he lost his right arm in an airstrike.

Al-Madioum also spoke to CBS News from Syrian prison in 2019, saying then that he never fought for the Islamic State group but had hopes of becoming a doctor, and that IS gave him a "blank check to buy whatever I wanted."

Al-Madioum's plea agreement says he began researching Islamic State group in 2014. Court documents say he told FBI that he got advice about joining the group from a Twitter account that authorities say is known to post IS propaganda.

Al-Madioum is among several Minnesotans suspected of leaving the U.S. to join the Islamic State group.

In total, roughly three dozen people have left Minnesota to join militant groups in Somalia or Syria. In 2016, nine Minnesota men were sentenced on federal charges of conspiring to join the Islamic State group.

Al-Madioum, who was 18 when he left for Syria, is a native of Morocco and a naturalized U.S. citizen.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Afghan government withstand pressure?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghanistan-taliban-peace-talks-ghani/2021/01/13/0ea836d4-54de-11eb-acc5-92d2819a1ccb_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghanistan-taliban-peace-talks-ghani/2021/01/13/0ea836d4-54de-11eb-acc5-92d2819a1ccb_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>KABUL — Growing uncertainty over peace talks with the Taliban, a drumbeat of targeted killings and the looming withdrawal of U.S. troops have raised tension here to a fever pitch, prompting calls for President Ashraf Ghani to step down and an interim government to take over.</p> <p>Supporters of the idea say it would offer a better chance of settling the 19-year war in Afghanistan and ending the relentless bloodshed, given that the Taliban refuses to recognize Ghani's government as legitimate. Opponents call it a dangerous, irresponsible gambit that would benefit an assortment of opportunistic politicians eager to grab a share in power.</p> <p>"The only way to break the current deadlock is to form an interim government," said Jafar Mahdavi, a former legislator who is involved in the peace talks process. "The Taliban won't accept Ghani's rule, and they won't join his government."</p>



Ghani has repeatedly insisted that [he will remain in office](#) for his full five-year term and see the peace talks to fruition.

But a new round of negotiations, which have made almost no headway since they started in September, stalled this week, as two of the top Taliban negotiators failed to return to the talks in Qatar after visiting Pakistan for consultations.

The group's spokesman in Doha, the Qatari capital, [tweeted Saturday](#) that the negotiating teams were still working on preparing a substantive agenda for the talks. But delegates to the talks from Kabul said the process had been further slowed by the unexplained absence of the top two Taliban negotiators, Abdul Ghani Baradar and Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai.

Baradar, a founder of the Taliban movement, spent eight years in prison in Pakistan but was released in 2018, at the United States' request, to [participate in the peace process](#).

The role of Pakistan in the peace talk process has taken on sudden new importance in the past several weeks. The country has long said it supports the talks and seeks a stable Afghanistan. But it has also hosted fugitive Taliban leaders for years and sheltered violent anti-Afghan militias that operate along the long, porous border between the neighboring Muslim countries.

Complicating matters for the Afghan government is a Friday deadline for [U.S. troops in Afghanistan](#) to be reduced from 5,000 to about 2,500. This was the chief demand of the militants, who signed a separate deal with U.S. officials in February.

The troop reduction could cause the Afghan government to lose much of its remaining leverage in the talks. Ghani's position was already weakened when he agreed to [release about 5,000 imprisoned Taliban fighters](#) under U.S. pressure to seal the February pact.

Pentagon officials said Tuesday that the troop drawdown was expected to proceed as planned, even though it is widely opposed in Congress. A recently enacted [defense policy bill](#) bars the U.S. government from using funds to pay for it without a "comprehensive interagency assessment of the risks and impacts" of leaving only a minimal U.S. military presence in the country.

Another stumbling block in the talks is the continued high level of Taliban attacks. A recent spate of [unclaimed targeted killings](#), including shootings and car bombs, has left several dozen civic and democratic activists, journalists, government officials and others dead. Afghan officials have blamed the Taliban for the attacks, and U.S. military officials made the same accusation last week.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the Trump administration's special envoy for Afghan peace, [made a whirlwind visit](#) to the region this past week, holding meetings in Pakistan and Qatar as well as Kabul in an attempt to ensure the survival of the U.S.-Taliban deal and press for a nationwide cease-fire to accompany the Doha talks.

Khalilzad met with a variety of political leaders and diplomats here, but Ghani refused to see him. The president, like many Afghans, felt betrayed by the generous terms of the deal he brokered with the insurgents. Now they view Khalilzad as pushing too hard for a quick settlement among Afghans, especially [amid local media reports](#) that he was encouraging an interim government. Last week Khalilzad called on both sides to reduce violence but did not blame the Taliban for the recent targeted attacks.

The leader of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Afghanistan, Ross Wilson, said in a statement on Twitter on Wednesday that the United States is not pushing for a new government.

"We have not advocated, and the United States is not advocating, an interim government," [he wrote](#). "The outcomes of Afghanistan Peace Negotiations are up to Afghans & we believe those outcomes should reflect the wishes & aspirations of the Afghan people."



	<p>Abdullah Abdullah, head of the government council for peace and reconciliation, has said for months that he would be open to the creation of an interim government if that would help the prospects for peace. Abdullah was Ghani's top rival for the presidency in the past two elections.</p> <p>"We have to be flexible in our thoughts," Abdullah told an international virtual conference last year. "Nothing should derail us from getting to a durable, lasting and acceptable peace for all Afghans, including the Taliban."</p> <p>Some Afghan officials and experts have called for an interim government to be used only as a last resort.</p> <p>"To form an interim government now would be premature and irresponsible," said Davood Moradian, director of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies. "It would mean dismantling the current government, and the members would have no real authority to make an agreement. There would be bound to be infighting among them. This might be a possible outcome of talks, but it cannot come first."</p> <p>But fears remain about what an interim government would mean for the democratic gains made since the Taliban was forced out of power.</p> <p>"The people of Afghanistan are not supporting an interim government because there is no guarantee its formation could end the war in the country," said Mohammad Khalid Momand, a member of parliament. "Afghans don't want to lose the achievements of the past 18 years."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 German regional spy chief fired in probe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-regional-spy-chief-fired-christmas-attack-probe-75224267">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-regional-spy-chief-fired-christmas-attack-probe-75224267</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- The domestic intelligence chief in Germany's northeastern state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has been fired over his agency's failure to pass on information about a 2016 truck attack on a <a href="#">Christmas</a> market in Berlin that killed 12 people.</p> <p>German news agency dpa reported that Reinhard Mueller was removed from his post Wednesday.</p> <p>Mueller had told lawmakers that his agency did not immediately transmit information about possible supporters of Islamist attacker Anis Amri to investigators who were probing the attack.</p> <p>An informant reported in 2017 he had heard that a Berlin crime family helped Amri flee the capital after he drove a stolen truck into the crowded <a href="#">Christmas</a> market.</p> <p>This information was only passed on to investigators two years later, after the informant's handler reached out directly to federal authorities.</p> <p>Twelve people were killed and dozens more were injured in the attack, which was later claimed by the Islamic State group. Amri was killed in a shootout with Italian police.</p> <p>Officials have pinpointed numerous failings by German security agencies in the case, including that police may have missed an opportunity to arrest Amri months before the attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 US sanctions influential Iraq militia leader</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-sanctions-controversial-deputy-iraqi-paramilitaries-75229192">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-sanctions-controversial-deputy-iraqi-paramilitaries-75229192</a>

<p><b>GIST</b></p>	<p>BAGHDAD -- The United States on Wednesday imposed sanctions on an influential Iraqi militia leader and deputy of a powerful Iran-backed umbrella of mostly Shiite paramilitary groups, designating him a global terrorist figure.</p> <p>The move by the U.S. Treasury against Abdulaziz al-Mohammadawi, known as Abu Fadak, was expected by many Iraqi officials. It was also the second time in a week that a senior Iraqi militia official has been sanctioned.</p> <p>The chairman of the paramilitary umbrella, the Popular Mobilization Forces, Falih al-Fayyadh was sanctioned last Friday under the Magnitsky Act and accused of rights abuses against antigovernment protesters. The law allows the U.S. to target any foreigner accused of human rights violations and corruption.</p> <p>Abu Fadak, a senior figure of the Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia, is also acting deputy chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces, a role he took on after a U.S. airstrike last January in Baghdad killed the militia's deputy head Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a powerful founding member of Kataib Hezbollah and the lead architect of the umbrella group of paramilitaries.</p> <p>Top Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander, Gen. Qassim Soleimani, was also killed in that airstrike.</p> <p>Apart from being a member Kataib Hezbollah, which the U.S. has described as an "Iran-backed terrorist organization," the U.S. claims Abu Fadak is working with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's expeditionary Quds Force to "reshape official Iraqi state security institutions ... to instead support Iran's malign activities," according to the U.S. State Department.</p> <p>The statement said Iran-backed elements, including Kataib Hezbollah, are involved in sectarian violence and are responsible for attacks against Iraqi government facilities and diplomatic missions.</p> <p>The PMF was formed in 2014 to counter the Islamic State group, following a fatwa from Iraq's top Shiite cleric Ali al-Sistani, and was later brought under the government's fold. Its growing influence in Iraqi affairs has alarmed the U.S. officials who accuse it of orchestrating attacks on the American Embassy in Baghdad.</p> <p>Abu Fadak was a largely unknown figure until he replaced al-Muhandis even though some militia groups opposed his selection.</p> <p>In contrast to Abu Fadak's designation, Iraq's Foreign Ministry promptly denounced last week's measures against al-Fayyadh, who is a more established political figure and a former Iraqi national security advisor. The ministry said it would follow up with the incoming Biden administration in Washington on the matter.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/13 Spokane: 71mph wind gust; 2 killed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/weather/windstorm-spokane-north-idaho-2021/293-8d4e5c83-81ae-4926-ab8b-eea892365d2e">https://www.krem.com/article/weather/windstorm-spokane-north-idaho-2021/293-8d4e5c83-81ae-4926-ab8b-eea892365d2e</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — A deadly windstorm in the Spokane area left damage in its wake on Wednesday.</p> <p>A 71-mph gust recorded at the Spokane International Airport makes the 2021 windstorm as strong as the <a href="#">historic storm in 2015</a> that led Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to declare a state of emergency. The storm killed two people and left 200,000 people without power for days.</p> <p>Coeur d'Alene recorded a wind gust of 61 mph on Wednesday morning.</p>

A woman is dead after a tree fell on her car on Spokane's South Hill on Wednesday morning. A 59-year-old man from Post Falls was also killed when a tree hit his car while he was driving on Highway 97 in North Idaho.

Widespread damage due to downed trees has also been reported throughout the Inland Northwest and tens of thousands of people are [without power](#). The City of Spokane is reporting 130 fallen trees at parks in the area.

[A High Wind Warning](#) was in effect for all of eastern Washington and North Idaho but it expired at 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

The strongest winds were felt early Wednesday morning. Winds slowly died down throughout day, but strong wind gusts of 40 to 50 mph were still felt during the afternoon hours.

4:43 p.m.: Highway 395 near Clayton reopens after downed power lines and a power pole blocked the road.

3:30 p.m.: The City of Spokane said it has received dozens of reports of trees or branches in roads and about 130 have come down in city parks. Some trees and broken branches remain at risk of falling.

The city said some trees have been completely uprooted and could have impacted underground utilities. Similar tree risks remain in neighborhoods.

3:30 p.m.: A man was killed on Highway 97, just east of Coeur d'Alene and four miles south of I-90, according to Idaho State Police. ISP said Jon Snider, 59, of Post Falls was headed north on Highway 97 at about 8 a.m. when a tree came off the hillside adjacent to the highway and hit his car.

Snider drove over the embankment off the highway toward Lake Coeur d'Alene, ISP reported. He died from his injuries at the scene.

2:30 p.m.: Power outages across the Inland Northwest have decreased to more than 97,000.

2:15 p.m.: The City of Spokane will provide free disposal of trees and tree limbs.

Solid Waste Collection will provide curbside clean green pickup the week of Jan. 18 for customers who subscribe to that service. Free disposal also will be available at the Waste to Energy Facility (WTE), 2900 S. Geiger Blvd., starting Friday, Jan. 15, and running through Saturday, Jan. 30.

Tree debris from the storm can be placed in green yard waste carts for pickup on customers' normal garbage collection days during the week of Jan. 18.

12:30 p.m.: Power outages across the Inland Northwest have increased to 103,000.

12:04 p.m.: Highway 395 is closed in both directions near Clayton due to power lines and a power pole over the road, according to a tweet from the Washington State Department of Transportation's Eastern region. This is near Railroad Road north of Deer Park.

10:30 a.m.: Two lanes of westbound I-90 west of the Highway 2 interchange were closed due to power lines in the road. The road has since reopened.

9:38 a.m.: There are trees and power lines down in the City of Rathdrum on Highway 41 at Coeur d'Alene Street. Rathdrum Police is redirecting traffic, but asks any oversized load or semi-trucks with double or triple trailers avoid the area and take an alternate route.

9:20 a.m.: Two trees have fallen in front of Showalter Hall at Eastern Washington University in Cheney.

	<p>9:17 a.m.: Trees have fallen into cars at 16th and Grand Avenues on the South Hill and are blocking the road.</p> <p>9:17 a.m.: A KREM 2 viewer is reporting multiple downed trees at Coeur d'Alene Park in Spokane's Browne's Addition neighborhood.</p> <p>9:00 a.m.: A tree fell into a home at 5th and I streets in Cheney.</p> <p>8:06 a.m.: Kootenai County Sheriff's Office is asking people to only call 911 for emergencies. The agency says its dispatch center is being overrun with reports of downed trees and other weather-related events. The sheriff's office has received more than 400 calls for service as a result of the storm.</p> <p>7:55 a.m.: Spokane police confirmed that a person died after a tree fell on their car at 27th Avenue and Post Street on the South Hill. SPD is encouraging people to stay home and be aware of downed trees and powerlines if they have to go out during the storm.</p> <p>7:49 a.m.: The 71-mph gust at Spokane International Airport makes the 2021 windstorm as strong as the historic 2015 storm.</p> <p>6:15 a.m.: A woman was rescued from her home in Spokane after she was trapped by a fallen tree. Spokane County Fire District 8 later said she was injured and taken to the hospital.</p> <p>4:00 a.m.: Power outages began to occur on Avista's system at 4:00 a.m. with both transmission and distribution systems impacted.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Wind storm sinks massive concrete dock</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/wind-storm-sinks-massive-concrete-dock-at-anacortes-shipyard">https://komonews.com/news/local/wind-storm-sinks-massive-concrete-dock-at-anacortes-shipyard</a>
GIST	<p>ANACORTES, Wash. -- A massive concrete dock at an Anacortes shipyard sank during a windstorm that slammed into the area Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Wind gusts were measured from 45-55 mph in the general North Sound waters, where Lovrick Sea Craft's shipyard was located.</p> <p>"It caused a concrete pier to sink and it took another tug boat down with it -- it's about halfway under water," Petty Officer Trevor Lilburn, spokesperson for the Coast Guard's 13th District, told KOMO NewsRadio.</p> <p>In addition, a commercial fishing boat pulled loose from its mooring and eventually ran aground. Crews were waiting for high tide to bring it back to port.</p> <p>A second vessel -- a retired Coast Guard Cutter -- nearly suffered the same fate.</p> <p>"The winds were so high that all of the moorings except one were wrenched loose," Lilburn said. "So a tug boat had to go out very early this morning and gain control of it and get it into a temporary mooring."</p> <p>A large concrete dock at Anacortes' Lovrick Sea Craft shipyard has sunk. (Photo: KOMO News)</p> <p>Crews were just getting able to survey the damage with daylight and figure out exactly what happened. Much of the dock is now sitting under 22 feet of water.</p> <p>"I'm not sure how the pier broke loose and sank," Lilburn said. "That's quite a strange thing we don't see that every day."</p>

HEADLINE	01/13 Venice watching tourists' every move
SOURCE	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/venice-control-room-tourism/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/venice-control-room-tourism/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN) — They're watching you, wherever you walk. They know exactly where you pause, when you slow down and speed up, and they count you in and out of the city.</p> <p>What's more, they're tracking your phone, so they can tell exactly how many people from your country or region are in which area, at which time.</p> <p>And they're doing it in a bid to change tourism for the better.</p> <p>Welcome to Venice in a post-Covid world. The canal city may have been known as La Serenissima, or The Most Serene, during its centuries ruling the waves as the powerful Republic of Venice.</p> <p>In the past few years, however, things have become rather less serene, thanks to the almost 30 million visitors who descend each year on the city of just 50,000 inhabitants.</p> <p>Before Covid-19 struck, tourists were arriving in often unmanageable numbers, choking the main streets and filling up the waterbuses. Authorities had tried various measures, from introducing separate residents' lines at major vaporetto (waterbus) stops to bringing in turnstiles that would filter locals from tourists on busy days. A planned "entrance tax," due to debut in 2020, has been <a href="#">postponed to January 2022</a>, due to the pandemic.</p> <p>But as well as controlling footfall, the authorities wanted to track tourism itself -- not just by registering overnight guests but, in a city where the vast majority of visitors are daytrippers, by counting exactly who is in the city -- and where they go.</p> <p>Enter the Venice Control Room.</p> <p><b>A state-of-the-art 'control tower'</b></p> <p>On the island of Tronchetto, next to the two-mile bridge separating Venice from the Italian mainland, the Control Room opened in September 2020. A former warehouse that had been abandoned since the 1960s, it's part of a new headquarters for the city's police and government -- a self-described "control tower" for the city.</p> <p>The building has offices for the mayor, other dignitaries, and a large CCTV room, with cameras feeding in images from around the city, watched over by the police.</p> <p>So far so normal. But then, across the corridor, there's the Smart Control Room -- another bank of screens with images and information coming live from around the lagoon. They're not being monitored for crime, though; they're feeding information to the authorities that will create a profile of the hordes of people visiting Venice. The hope is that gathering the information will not only track footfall now, enabling the authorities to activate turnstiles and start charging for entrance on busy days. Eventually, they hope that the data will help create a more sustainable tourism plan for the future.</p> <p><b>How to track tourism</b></p> <p>"This is the brain of the city," says Marco Bettini, co-director general of <a href="#">Venis</a>, the Venice-based multimedia and tech company which built the system.</p> <p>"We know in real time how many people are in each part [of the city], and which countries they're from." He clicks on the video feed from the Grand Canal -- the "freeway" of Venice, as he calls it -- to look at the traffic.</p>

"There's huge traffic pressure here," he says. Public waterbuses, boats delivering goods, taxis, residents zipping up the "road" in their own, private boats, and, of course, those famous gondolas -- they're all jostling for space on the Grand Canal. With no designated lanes, it can be a free-for-all.

But the new system not only records what's going on; it analyzes the traffic, recognizing the different types of boats, from gondola to a "topo" -- essentially a water-truck. It then stores the numbers. And it even tallies with the public transportation timetables, logging if a waterbus is late and, if so, by how many minutes.

Workers can also activate a "time machine" to look back -- so far today, for example, there have been more than 1,000 boats passing under the main bridge at Piazzale Roma, the main entry point to the city.

It's the pedestrian numbers, however, that are of more interest to the authorities looking at tourism patterns. The system not only counts visitors in the vicinity of cameras posted around the city, but it also, in conjunction with TIM (Telecom Italia, Italy's largest telecommunications provider), crunches who they are and where they come from.

On this winter day, before the Veneto region entered another semi-lockdown, for example, so far, 13,628 people have entered Venice, and 8,548 have left. In the hour after 7am, 1,688 people arrived at Piazzale Roma (the gateway to the city by road and tram) -- the commuters.

At 10am, the arrivals reached a peak of 2,411: most likely the daytrippers.

### **Tracking visitors by country and area**

The authorities can see where these new arrivals are from by analyzing their phone data (the information is all aggregated automatically, so no personal details can be gleaned).

There are 97 people in the area around St Mark's Square on this Saturday afternoon, according to Bettini -- of which only 24 are not Italian.

And so far today there have been 955 people in the area, 428 of whom have come from abroad. Of the 527 Italians, only 246 are resident in Venice (if a mobile phone is regularly logged in the city, it is counted as a resident).

"As you can see, the number of daytrippers -- is steep," says Bettini. This is crucial information, because these "hit-and-run" tourists are usually charged with causing the most damage to the struggling city. They tend to come in from other parts of Italy -- often from beach resorts on a bad weather day -- and rarely spend money, bringing their own food and eating illicit picnics on bridges and on waterfronts. But since they don't stay overnight, they cannot be counted by the authorities -- until now.

Counting the daytrippers and tracking where they tend to visit, and which streets they take, could be crucial for a city which has resorted to closing its main thoroughfares to non-locals at busy times in an attempt to spread people throughout the city.

As Valeria Duflot, co-founder of [Venezia Autentica](#) an online social enterprise working on sustainable tourism, says: "The problem is not that Venice has too many visitors. The problem is that all the visitors go to the same two places: St Mark's Square and the Rialto Bridge."

### **Where are you from?**

Italians are logged by the region they live in. Of the foreigners, the system breaks down where they come from (data is based on where their mobile phone is registered, so most likely their country of origin), and displays them as bars on a map on the city -- a graphic representation of overcrowding in real time, with colors going from white to red as the numbers get higher.

Today, 36% of foreign visitors are German, followed by the Swiss (16%) and British (13% -- this visit took place before the new UK variant saw British travelers banned from Italy). Just 1.312% of visitors are



	<p>from the United States -- although, given that American travelers are still banned from the European Union, it's a surprise it's even that much.</p> <p>And today, there have been 85,000 people logged in Venice. A much greater number, 177,000, have been in Mestre, on the mainland. On the islands -- where places such as Burano and Murano are popular with tourists -- there are 5,700 people, this Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>There's plenty more that the authorities are keeping tabs on: how fast people are moving in places like St Mark's Square (start running and the machine highlights you), the tide levels throughout the lagoon (crucial for monitoring <i>acqua alta</i> flooding, and determining when the <a href="#">new Mose flood barriers</a> should be raised).</p> <p>The system took three years to build, at a cost of €3m (\$3.5m). And although some might baulk at the privacy implications (although no personal data is recorded, you and your provenance is essentially being logged as you move around the city), the authorities are very proud.</p> <p>"In 2021, Venice celebrates its 1,600th anniversary," says Bettini. "And we'll be celebrating with technology."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 NASA: fewer galaxies than first thought</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/science/nasa-finds-fewer-galaxies-than-first-thought">https://www.foxnews.com/science/nasa-finds-fewer-galaxies-than-first-thought</a>
GIST	<p>A mission from <a href="#">NASA</a> has discovered there may be a lot fewer galaxies than initially believed, opening up the possibility humanity is alone in the universe.</p> <p>The New Horizons mission, which yielded the first <a href="#">close-up photos of Pluto</a>, provided enough data for scientists to make the determination that it's likely the number of galaxies is in the hundreds of billions, rather than 2 trillion, as initially believed.</p> <p>"It's an important number to know — how many galaxies are there?" the study's lead author, Marc Postman, said in a <a href="#">statement</a>. "We simply don't see the light from 2 trillion galaxies."</p> <p>The findings, which were published and can be read <a href="#">here</a>, are in stark contrast to the 2 trillion figure that had long been used, thanks to data from the Hubble Space Telescope. Scientists used a mathematical model to determine that 90% of the galaxies in the universe were beyond Hubble's ability to see "visible light."</p> <p>Traveling at roughly 33,000 miles per hour, the \$720 million New Horizons spacecraft, which launched in January 2006, will eventually reach interstellar space, like the Voyager <a href="#">probes</a> before it. The fact that it is currently near the edge of the Solar System allows it to see ambient sky 10 times darker than the Hubble's vantage point.</p> <p>"These kinds of measurements are exceedingly difficult. A lot of people have tried to do this for a long time," the study's co-author, Tod Lauer, explained. "New Horizons provided us with a vantage point to measure the cosmic optical background better than anyone has been able to do it."</p> <p>The New Horizons spacecraft is now 4.4 billion miles from Earth.</p> <p>"Take all the galaxies Hubble can see, double that number, and that's what we see — but nothing more," Lauer added.</p> <p>NASA's James Webb Telescope, which had its launch pushed back because of the <a href="#">coronavirus pandemic</a>, could help scientists learn more about the faint glow in the background of space and learn if those are dwarf galaxies or something else.</p>



	The New Horizons spacecraft has made a number of discoveries in recent memory, including the object <a href="#">Arrokoth</a> , previously known as Ultima Thule. In May 2019, New Horizons discovered water and organic molecules on <a href="#">Arrokoth</a> , which is deep within the so-called Kuiper Belt, or Twilight Zone, well beyond the orbit of Neptune.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Predictable patterns in armed conflicts?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20210113-an-avalanche-of-violence-revealing-predictable-patterns-in-armed-conflicts">http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20210113-an-avalanche-of-violence-revealing-predictable-patterns-in-armed-conflicts</a>
GIST	<p>New work by SFI's Collective Computation Group (C4) finds that human conflict exhibits remarkable regularity despite substantial geographic and cultural differences.</p> <p>In November 1941, two years after the start of World War II, the English mathematician and physicist Lewis Fry Richardson made a startling observation about patterns of "wars and other fatal conflicts." By analyzing death data from previous clashes, he found a connection between how severe conflicts are and how frequently they occur. This observation, known as Richardson's Law, is what's called a "scaling law". It suggests smaller conflicts are scaled-down versions of bigger ones. This is surprising because one might think that big conflicts and small conflicts are the results of different kinds of processes and social problems.</p> <p>Richardson's work inspired decades of investigation into scaling laws that describe when and where conflicts arise. Although these scaling laws seem robust and widely applicable, researchers have, to date, produced no compelling, systematic explanation for why they occur. In a paper published recently in Physical Review E, members of the <a href="#">Santa Fe Institute's Collective Computation Group (C4)</a> and their co-author Christopher Meyers from Cornell University <a href="#">present a new model</a> using data from armed conflict in Africa that explains how conflicts spread over a geographic region. More technically, the model describes the scale-free ways that clusters of violent interactions grow and spread over time and space.</p> <p>Battles, revolutions, and other fights in history might seem violent in their own ways, says SFI's <a href="#">Eddie Lee</a>, a postdoctoral researcher who led the new work, but with the right lens one can identify unifying principles. "Your intuition says each of these conflicts should be a consequence of specific social and cultural dynamics," says Lee, "but then you do the analyses and you find that in fact these seemingly different conflicts are characterized by the same patterns."</p> <p>Lee and his collaborators discovered the general patterns by looking at how an initial event spreads and ignites conflicts in other regions. Lee likens these "conflict avalanches" to well-known cascades in nature. If you add enough sand to a pile, for example, the sides will eventually become so steep that a single new grain can create an avalanche. By virtue of collapse, however, the slope flattens and allows another build-up. If the trees in a forest grow dense enough, they'll enable the rapid spread of a fire from a lightning strike, clearing out the forest and allowing it to reach a critical density again.</p> <p>"Maybe we can imagine conflict in this way," Lee says. "There is some stress building in an area, and eventually you get cascades of action."</p> <p>These cascade dynamics might seem to explain large variation among conflict outbreaks, with some petering out quickly and others generating long-lasting conflagrations. But Lee and his colleagues, in their work, have also found it essential to account for regional variation. Not only is conflict much more frequent and intense in some regions compared to others, the spatial variation in intensity may itself follow a scaling law.</p> <p>To build their model, the group analyzed data from two decades of armed conflicts in Africa, collected in the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. The dataset, an archive of reported fatal conflicts, includes more than 100,000 events that occurred up to thousands of kilometers apart. Because each event</p>

	<p>was labeled by when it occurred, where it occurred, and how many people died, the SFI researchers were able to find mathematical rules that connected conflicts across time and geography.</p> <p>“We observed amazing regularity,” Lee says. They find that the physical scales of how conflict spread, through time and space, seem intimately related to the number of conflict reports and fatalities, revealing how the geographic and social dimensions of violence are intertwined.</p> <p>The scaling relations Lee and colleagues found in the African armed conflict data resonate with other scaling laws including how innovation and crime scale with population size in a city. One way to push this research forward, Lee says, is to see how closely these scaling laws align: “How are patterns that we see in armed conflicts linked to other patterns that we’ve found elsewhere?”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Iran preps key nuclear-weapons material</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-is-assembling-gear-able-to-produce-material-for-nuclear-weapons-officials-say-11610554933?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-is-assembling-gear-able-to-produce-material-for-nuclear-weapons-officials-say-11610554933?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>Iran has taken a significant new step toward possible atomic-weapons production, starting work on an assembly line to manufacture a key material used at the core of nuclear warheads, the United Nations atomic agency said in a confidential report Wednesday, raising the stakes in <a href="#">Tehran’s standoff with Washington</a> ahead of President-elect <a href="#">Joe Biden</a>’s inauguration.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency, in a report for member states viewed by The Wall Street Journal, said Iran has told the watchdog that it has started manufacturing equipment it will use to produce uranium metal at a site in Isfahan in coming months.</p> <p>Uranium metal can be used to construct the core of a nuclear weapon.</p> <p>Iran hasn’t made uranium metal so far, senior Western officials said. The IAEA said Tehran had given it no timeline for when it would do so. Still, the development brings Iran closer to crossing the line between nuclear operations with a potential civilian use, such as enriching nuclear fuel for power-generating reactors, and nuclear-weapons work, something Tehran has long denied ever carrying out.</p> <p>Iran’s ambassador to the IAEA, Kazem Gharib Abadi, said Wednesday on Twitter that Iran would produce uranium metal, saying it would allow the development of a new fuel for the Tehran civilian research reactor. Iran has said it would take four to five months to install the equipment to produce a uranium powder from which uranium metal is made.</p> <p>The Iranian government has moved methodically over the past 18 months to expand its nuclear activities. Since <a href="#">the Trump administration withdrew from a 2015 international accord</a> limiting Iranian nuclear activities and began imposing sweeping economic sanctions, Iran has begun stockpiling more enriched uranium and taken other steps barred under the nuclear deal.</p> <p>Making uranium metal is also prohibited by the deal, which also involves the U.K., France, Germany, China and Russia.</p> <p>Mr. Biden has said <a href="#">he wants to resume diplomacy with Iran</a> and is looking for a way to return to the nuclear agreement, which was reached when he was vice president. But reviving the international pact could be complicated politically and for technical reasons, and could face stiffer opposition if Iran conducts nuclear weapons-related work.</p> <p>Western diplomats say that by taking the recent steps, Iran is seeking leverage to pressure Mr. Biden to move swiftly to drop sanctions on Iran and return speedily to the nuclear accord without laying down any conditions. By threatening major new steps on uranium metal production and scaling back U.N.</p>

inspectors' access to Iran, Tehran could leave Mr. Biden with a difficult choice—a rapid return to the deal or a major confrontation between the U.S. and Iran.

After [the killing of leading Iranian nuclear scientist](#) Mohsen Fakhrizadeh—in an attack Tehran has blamed on Israel—Iran's parliament in December called on the government to start enriching uranium up to 20% purity and to begin producing uranium metal within five months if the U.S. doesn't drop its economic sanctions. Israel has declined to comment on the killing of Mr. Fakhrizadeh. Iran said last week it was starting to produce 20% enriched uranium.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran had agreed to a 15-year moratorium on uranium and plutonium metallurgical production. Iran was allowed to work on advanced fuel for research reactors, one of the few civilian uses for uranium metal, but only after 10 years.

When enriched to weapons grade of roughly 90% purity, uranium metal plays a central role in atomic weapons, forming the core of the device which, when triggered, sets off a chain reaction that creates the nuclear explosion.

Even with the production of uranium metal, Iran would need to complete many additional steps before it is capable of building a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile. It would need to be able to build a warhead compact enough to be carried on such a missile and manufacture a re-entry vehicle to prevent the weapon from exploding in flight.

Iran may still need years to master those skills, some analysts believe.

Iran has denied ever working on nuclear weapons, but Western officials and the IAEA have said Tehran had a structured weapons program until 2003. And the IAEA has for years pursued leads about the Iranians' work on uranium materials.

Over the past year, the IAEA has sought to locate a natural uranium-metal disc, present in Iran in the early 2000s, which is no longer accounted for. That led to a protracted standoff, which saw IAEA inspectors banned from visiting two Iranian sites for months.

The IAEA said in a report in 2013 that Iran had told the agency it intended to build a facility to produce uranium-metal ingots, but it was widely believed a production line was never completed.

According to Western officials, the work on the new Iranian uranium-metal production line is being done by a company called Sureh, a subsidiary of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, which is currently under U.S. sanctions and was previously sanctioned by the European Union for its nuclear-related work.

The work is taking place at an Iranian nuclear facility in Isfahan, near the Uranium Conversion Facility, which is under regular IAEA inspection.

Some Western officials have said Iran has worked for several years on research to pave the way to being able to produce uranium metal.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Airlines ban 2,700 passengers from flying
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/capitol-riots-passengers-banned-airlines-top/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/capitol-riots-passengers-banned-airlines-top/</a>
GIST	During an Alaska Airlines flight from Washington, D.C. to Seattle last week, a number of passengers refused to wear masks and harassed crew members, the airline said. In response, Alaska banned 14 of the passengers on that Thursday flight — just some of a growing number of disruptive passengers <a href="#">airlines are putting on their own no-fly lists</a> . And now the Federal Aviation Administration has announced it will start taking legal action over such behavior going forward.

Calling those passengers "rowdy" and "argumentative," Alaska Airlines said in a statement it has banned more than 300 passengers since August for violating its mask policy.

"Their behavior was unacceptable. Because of their actions and non-compliance, we have banned 14 of those passengers from future travel with us," the airline said. "We apologize to our other guests who were made uncomfortable on the flight. We will not tolerate any disturbance on board our aircraft or at any of the airports we serve."

The lists compiled by individual airlines — different from the federal no-fly list, which aims to block suspected terrorists from the skies — has swelled to more than 2,700 people, CBS News has confirmed. The flight bans grew out of [mask requirements](#) put in place due to the [coronavirus](#). Most flight bans will last until those mask policies are suspended at the end of the pandemic.

Many of the bans have occurred in the last week, after the violent riot at the U.S. Capitol.

The order signed Wednesday by FAA Administrator Steve Dickson means unruly passengers will no longer get a warning or counseling, which the agency said had been common practice in such incidents.

"The FAA has seen a disturbing increase in incidents where airline passengers have disrupted flights with threatening or violent behavior. These incidents have stemmed both from passengers' refusals to wear masks and from recent violence at the U.S. Capitol," the FAA's announcement states.

While American Airlines refused to disclose the number of customers banned, the airline did confirm it had added customers to its internal refuse list from flights to and from D.C. over the last week, including a passenger shown refusing to wear a mask on a Sunday flight in a viral video.

"We are working closely with local law enforcement and airport authority partners to ensure the safety of our customers and team members on the ground and in the air," the airline said in a statement Thursday.

"We also have increased staffing at Washington D.C.-area airports and will not serve alcohol on flights to and from this area as a precautionary measure. We will continue to enforce policies that ensure our customers' and team members' safety and wellbeing."

The Association of Professional Flight Attendants, American's flight attendants union, said it has set up a hotline for members to report these encounters, which they told CBS include last week a union member being harassed with racial epithets while riding a hotel shuttle to Reagan National Airport and another being harassed by passengers who refused to wear their masks while on board the plane.

A spokesman for United Airlines said they had banned 60 people in the last week, and Alaska Airlines confirmed it banned 32 people.

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, which represents nearly 50,000 attendants at 17 airlines including United and Alaska, called the behavior "a new kind of threat in the air" in a communication with its members.

"The mob mentality behavior that took place on several flights to the D.C. area yesterday was unacceptable and threatened the safety and security of every single person onboard," said Sara Nelson, international president of the union in a [statement](#) last Wednesday.

"Some of the people who traveled in our planes yesterday participated in the insurrection at the Capitol today," she said. "Their violent and seditious actions at the Capitol today create further concern about their departure from the DC area. Acts against our democracy, our government, and the freedom we claim as Americans must disqualify these individuals from the freedom of flight."

Delta Airlines removed two people from a flight from D.C. to Minneapolis-St. Paul on Friday, and an American Airlines pilot scolded passengers on a Friday flight for their unruly behavior.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued a reminder to passengers Thursday about unruly behavior in the air, warning it could lead to prison and an up to \$35,000 fine.

Disruptions at airports have prompted authorities to ramp up security at airports and onboard aircraft, a government security source briefed on the matter tells CBS News — including additional air marshals on flights into and out of the three airports in the National Capitol region, and officers at the gates of flights into those airports.

Video shared on social media in the wake of the riot showed protesters at airports confronting Utah Senator Mitt Romney, a Republican who has condemned the attacks and criticized President Trump; South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, also a Republican; and Representative Lou Correa, a Democrat from California.

CBS News has confirmed airports across the country are enhancing security and stepping up police presence in their terminals following the violence at the U.S. Capitol.

U.S. Capitol Police are also detailing officers to Dulles International Airport, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Baltimore-Washington International Airport to help escort arriving and departing members of Congress.

#### **By the numbers**

CBS News asked U.S. airlines how many passengers have been banned since the implementation of mask requirements and compiled the answers below. While two of the largest carriers declined to give numbers, the total is more than 2,700 people.

**Alaska:** 302

**Allegiant:** 15

**American:** declined to disclose

**Delta:** more than 700

**Frontier:** more than 500

**Hawaiian:** 56

**JetBlue:** 144

**Spirit:** 432

**Southwest:** declined to disclose

**United:** 615

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 NYC tourist attraction closed; 3<sup>rd</sup> suicide</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-vessel-closed-3rd-suicide-new-york-city/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-vessel-closed-3rd-suicide-new-york-city/</a>
GIST	<p>The centerpiece sculpture at a massive development on Manhattan's west side has been closed to the public, and the developer is looking at suicide prevention efforts after three deaths in the past year.</p> <p><a href="#">The Vessel</a>, a 150-foot-high sculpture in the shape of an inverted beehive made up of stairways and platforms in the Hudson Yards development that opened in March 2019, has been the site of three suicides, the most recent of which was on Monday.</p> <p><a href="#">CBS New York reported</a> that Related Companies says they have added extra security. That includes highly trained personnel who patrol the area and can identify potentially high-risk visitors.</p> <p>Lowell Kern, the chairman of the local community board, told the New York Times that a Related representative told him the sculpture was closed until further notice, and that the board would be informed of preventative measures that would be taken before the Vessel was re-opened to the public.</p>

	<a href="#">The Vessel was created</a> by British designer Thomas Heatherwick.
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 EU agency: mealworms safe to eat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cafe-croissant-worms-eu-agency-worms-safe-eat-75227704">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cafe-croissant-worms-eu-agency-worms-safe-eat-75227704</a>
GIST	<p>ROME -- The vaunted Mediterranean diet and the French “bon gout” are getting some competition: The European food safety agency says worms are safe to eat.</p> <p>The Parma-based agency published a scientific opinion Wednesday on the safety of dried yellow mealworms and gave them a thumbs up. Researchers said the worms, either eaten whole or in powdered form, are a protein-rich snack or ingredient for other foods.</p> <p>Allergic reactions may occur, especially depending on the type of feed given to the bugs, known officially as Tenebrio molitor larva. But overall “the panel concludes that the (novel food) is safe under the proposed uses and use levels.”</p> <p>Thus, the European Union has now thrown its weight behind worms in much the same way the United Nations has. The Food and Agriculture Agency in 2013 championed edible bugs as a low-fat, high-protein food for people, pets and livestock that are good for the environment and help feed the hungry.</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Thurston Co. K9, suspect injured; shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/suspect-k9-injured-in-officer-involved-shooting-on-southbound-i-5-in-thurston-county">https://www.q13fox.com/news/suspect-k9-injured-in-officer-involved-shooting-on-southbound-i-5-in-thurston-county</a>
GIST	<p><b>THURSTON COUNTY, Wash.</b> - A suspect and K9 officer were injured in an officer-involved shooting late Wednesday night.</p> <p>Thurston County Sheriff's Office deputies and Washington State Patrol responded around 9 p.m. Officials conducted a vehicle pursuit on I-5 south of milepost 88, near U.S. 12 and Grand Mound.</p> <p>At one point, an officer exchanged gunfire. A TCSO K9 was shot and sustained serious, but survivable injuries officials said.</p> <p>A 25-year-old male suspect was also shot and transported to a hospital in serious condition.</p> <p>WSDOT says the incident is causing a traffic backup. As of 11 p.m. all lanes are block in southbound lanes of I-5 near exit Prairie Creek.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Guilty plea; in China recruitment program</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/14/us/nasa-scientist-guilty-chinese-program/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/14/us/nasa-scientist-guilty-chinese-program/index.html</a>
GIST	(CNN)A senior NASA scientist pleaded guilty Wednesday in a New York federal court to lying about his involvement with a program established by the Chinese government which the US says sought to recruit those with access to intellectual property.



Meyya Meyyappan, 66, of Pacifica, California, was charged with one count of making false statements, according to a [news release](#) from the Department of Justice.

"Meyya Meyyappan held a trusted position at NASA, with access to valuable intellectual property. In violation of the terms of his employment and relevant laws and regulations, Meyyappan failed to disclose participation in a Chinese government recruitment program, and subsequently lied about it to NASA investigators, FBI agents, and our Office.

Now, having admitted his crime, Meyyappan awaits sentencing," acting US Attorney Audrey Strauss said in a statement.

Since 2006, Meyyappan has been chief scientist for Exploration Technology at NASA's [Ames Research Center](#) in California, the DOJ said.

He "participated in China's Thousand Talents Program, a program established by the Chinese government to recruit individuals with access to or knowledge of foreign technology or intellectual property, and held professorships at universities in China, South Korea, and Japan, and failed to disclose these associations and positions to NASA and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics," the statement said.

When he was questioned in October of last year, Meyyappan "falsely stated, among other things, that he was not a member of the Thousand Talents Program and that he did not hold a professorship at a Chinese university."

He faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000.

Meyyappan is scheduled to be sentenced on June 16, the DOJ said.

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HEADLINE	01/13 Capitol riot investigation; was it planned?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/politics/capitol-riot-investigation/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/politics/capitol-riot-investigation/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)Evidence uncovered so far, including weapons and tactics seen on surveillance video, suggests a level of planning that has led investigators to believe the attack on the US Capitol was <a href="#">not just a protest</a> that spiraled out of control, a federal law enforcement official says.</p> <p>Among the evidence the FBI is examining are indications that some participants at the Trump rally at the Ellipse, outside the White House, left the event early, perhaps to retrieve items to be used in the assault on the Capitol.</p> <p>A team of investigators and prosecutors are also focused on the command and control aspect of the attack, looking at travel and communications records to determine if they can build a case that is similar to a counterterrorism investigation, the official said.</p> <p>The belief, early in the probe, will demand significant investigation.</p> <p>The presence of corruption prosecutors and agents is in part because of their expertise in financial investigations. "We are following the money," the official said.</p> <p>By Wednesday morning, the FBI reported that it had received more than 126,000 digital tips from the public regarding the attack on the Capitol -- more than three times the number of tips received on Monday.</p> <p>Among the thousands of tips the FBI received are some that <a href="#">appear to show members of Congress</a> with people who later showed up at the Capitol riot, two law enforcement officials said. This doesn't mean members of Congress and staff are under investigation, but the FBI is checking the veracity of the claims, the officials said.</p>



### Counterterrorism strategy for arrests

At least some of the arrests already made are part of a strategy used in counterterrorism investigations, to find even a minimal charge and try to take a person of concern off the streets. That helps ease the possible threat amid concern about possible attacks on the inauguration, officials believe.

On January 4, for example, local police arrested the leader of the Proud Boys, Henry "Enrique" Tarrío, in Washington, DC.

Tarrío was taken into custody for allegedly burning a Black Lives Matter banner taken from a Black church last month during protests in the city after an earlier "Stop the Steal" rally. The Miami resident was charged with destruction of property related to the banner, however, federal authorities say they found Tarrío in possession of two high-capacity firearm magazines, prompting them to add a charge of Possession of High Capacity Feeding Device.

On Tuesday, federal authorities in New York City arrested Eduard Florea, 40, on at least one weapons charge after law enforcement, including the FBI and NYPD, responded to a Queens home in response to online postings about an armed caravan heading to the US Capitol, two law enforcement officials with knowledge of the investigation tells CNN.

Law enforcement sources told CNN that the man claims to be a Proud Boy and was arrested with live ammunition in the home.

Already, the public efforts by prosecutors and the FBI to encourage people who participated in the riot to turn themselves in is yielding fruit. Some attorneys have reached out to arrange for safe surrender of their clients in order to gain a measure of leniency and lessen the chance of a police raid on their homes, two officials said.

For instance, a counterterrorism prosecutor even appeared in court for an early hearing for one of the defendants on Tuesday, signaling how integrated the Justice Department's effort already is between the typical criminal prosecutors who handle initial criminal hearings and with the units focused on more complex crimes.

"With this strike force that was established to focus strictly on sedition charges, we're looking at in treating this just like a significant international counterterrorism or counterintelligence operation," DC US Attorney Michael Sherwin said Tuesday.

"We're looking at everything: money, travel records. Looking at disposition, movement, communication records. So no resource related to the FBI, or the US Attorney's Office will be unchecked in terms of trying to determine exactly if there was a command and control how it operated and how they executed these, these activities."

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HEADLINE	01/13 No bond for 'committed violent extremist'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wlns.com/news/no-bond-for-committed-violent-extremist-in-alleged-governor-kidnap-plot/">https://www.wlns.com/news/no-bond-for-committed-violent-extremist-in-alleged-governor-kidnap-plot/</a>
GIST	<p>GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) — A federal judge denied bond for one of the men charged with plotting to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.</p> <p>Magistrate Judge Sally Berens ordered Barry Croft Jr., 45, be held without bond pending trial on a charge of <a href="#">conspiracy to kidnap the governor</a>.</p> <p>Croft, a single father and truck driver from Delaware, <a href="#">could face up to life in prison</a> if convicted.</p>

In Grand Rapids' federal courthouse Wednesday afternoon, an FBI agent testified Croft [surveilled the governor's vacation home](#) in northern Michigan, brought improvised explosive devices to field training exercises and attended an Ohio meeting at which alleged plotters discussed plans.

Federal Prosecutor Nils Kessler told the court that Croft was "probably the most committed violent extremist of the whole group."

Kessler also played several audio recordings — made by undercover informants — of Croft discussing the alleged plot.

"We've heard him talking about wanting to kill people. I'm sure he has in his head that a life sentence is very likely for him, which gives him a lot of motivation to flee," Kessler said.

Croft's defense attorney argued the government's confidential informants encouraged the alleged plotters.

"The government is funding the (Ohio) meeting and inviting people into this meeting .... the government's the driving force behind it," said defense attorney Joshua Blanchard.

But the judge ultimately sided with the government.

"The defense argues that it's [simply a matter of 'big talk,'](#)" noted Berens, referring to the suspects' alleged plan.

"But the (undercover) recordings the government has introduced are chilling ... Mr. Croft said things ... like 'I'm gonna hurt people, I'm gonna hurt people so f—ing bad, and I'm going to burn motherf—ing houses down and blow sh-t up,'" Berens told the court.

"He talks about levelling buildings. He talks about burning people's houses down with them inside it and terrorizing people," Berens continued.

Berens determined Croft presented a danger to the community as well as a flight risk.

His criminal history includes 15 arrests and multiple instances of failing to appear in court.

U.S. Marshals transported Croft to West Michigan this week from federal prison in Philadelphia.

He's being held in the Newaygo County Jail, which houses federal inmates.

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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Capitol probe: sorting real tips from noise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/capitol-investigators-try-to-sort-real-tips-from-noise-2/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/capitol-investigators-try-to-sort-real-tips-from-noise-2/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Potential threats and leads are pouring in to law enforcement agencies nationwide after the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. The challenge is now figuring out what's real and what's just noise.</p> <p>Investigators are combing through a mountain of online posts, street surveillance and other intelligence, including information that suggests mobs could try to storm the Capitol again and threats to kill some members of Congress.</p> <p>Security is being tightened from coast to coast. Thousands of National Guard troops are guarding the Capitol ahead of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. Governors and lawmakers are stepping up protections at statehouses after an FBI bulletin this week warned of threats to legislative sessions and other inaugural ceremonies.</p>

A primary concern is the safety of members of Congress, particularly when they are traveling through airports, according to two U.S. officials briefed on the matter.

The FBI and other federal authorities use their substantial resources to prepare. But smaller local police departments lack the staff to hunt down every tip. They must rely heavily on state and federal assessments to inform their work, and that information sometimes slips through the cracks — which apparently happened last week.

A day before the deadly attack on the Capitol, the FBI sent an intelligence bulletin warning of potential violence to other agencies, including the Capitol Police. But officials either did not receive it or ignored it — and instead prepared for a free-speech protest, not a riot. It took nearly two hours for reinforcements to arrive to help disperse the mob. Five people died, including a Capitol officer.

“There are some grammar schools that are better protected than the Capitol,” said Brian Higgins, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and the former chief of a northern New Jersey police force.

Since last week, the FBI has opened 170 case files and received more than 100,000 pieces of digital media. The threats have ranged in specificity and complexity, according to officials briefed on them, making it difficult for authorities to determine which could be credible.

Combing through intelligence isn’t the same as shoe-leather detective work. Large departments like New York and Los Angeles have dedicated intelligence units — the NYPD even disseminated its own bulletin ahead of the riot. But smaller police forces rely on joint terrorism task forces and so-called fusion centers that were set up around the country after the 2001 attacks to improve communication between agencies.

Norton, Kansas, Police Chief Gerald Cullumber leads a seven-member department in the northwestern part of the state. He said he relies on larger agencies like the Kansas Highway Patrol because his agency is too small to do its own intelligence work. But Cullumber said he stays up to date on the latest information and briefs his officers.

“It doesn’t mean that we rest on our laurels,” he said. “It doesn’t mean that we ignore things.”

Once they receive intelligence reports, it’s up to local agencies to plan and take action to keep their communities safe, said Rich Stanek, the former sheriff of Hennepin County in Minnesota who now works in consulting and started the Public Safety Strategies Group.

“If I was the sheriff today, I would be taking it very seriously,” he said. “If they told me Jan. 17 is the date, yeah, I think it’s reasonable to plan for one week ahead and one week behind.”

Mike Koval, who retired in 2019 as the police chief in Madison, Wisconsin, said his state’s two fusion centers have technology and resources that go far beyond those of a single local police department.

Staying on top of all the potential intelligence on the internet is like “going to a water fountain to get a drink of water, and it’s coming out with the strength of a fire hydrant and it will take your jaw off,” Koval said.

Meanwhile, elected officials nationwide, including President Donald Trump, have started to urge calm amid the threats. Trump egged on the riots during a speech at the Washington Monument, beseeching his loyalists to go to the Capitol as Congress was certifying Biden’s victory. He took no responsibility for the riot.

“In light of reports of more demonstrations, I urge that there must be NO violence, NO lawbreaking and NO vandalism of any kind,” Trump said in a statement Wednesday. “That is not what I stand for,

	<p>and it is not what America stands for. I call on ALL Americans to help ease tensions and calm tempers.”</p> <p>Experts say explicit or implicit bias likely helped downplay last week’s threat because the protesters were white, and that must change, said Eric K. Ward, a senior fellow with the Southern Poverty Law Center and an expert on authoritarian movements and hate groups.</p> <p>That could be why Capitol police were so unprepared, compared with the much more aggressive law enforcement response to last summer’s protests following the death of George Floyd and other Black men killed by law enforcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Downtown Seattle stabbing; no arrest</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-downtown-seattle-stabbing/OFURTWRYOBGKZOAYMJ3XWVGOF/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-downtown-seattle-stabbing/OFURTWRYOBGKZOAYMJ3XWVGOF/</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> — An investigation is underway after a 56-year-old man was stabbed Wednesday afternoon in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>The attack happened after 3 p.m. in the <a href="#">300 block of Pike Street</a>.</p> <p>Police said the victim was taken to Harborview Medical Center in stable condition.</p> <p>Authorities are searching for the attacker.</p> <p>It is not yet known what led to the stabbing, but police are investigating.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Seattle police arrest man; kicking attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-search-man-suspected-attacks-two-women/O3QWVDFH3BAXXB4Z7F3ODBFORA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-search-man-suspected-attacks-two-women/O3QWVDFH3BAXXB4Z7F3ODBFORA/</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> — Seattle police arrested a 19-year-old man in connection with two similar but random unprovoked assaults on two women last week.</p> <p>After SPD released video of the two separate attacks to KIRO-7 Tuesday night, detectives said a viewer called 911 and identified the suspect, who was arrested and questioned Wednesday afternoon.</p> <p>“I’ve never been so happy in my life,” said Tracy Roberts, a community volunteer and nurse said, standing over the spot at 4th Ave. and Blanchard St. where she was kicked by the suspect Thursday Dec 7, while she planted flower bulbs near a tree along the sidewalk. “I want to cry now,” she said. “I have not been emotional at all.”</p> <p>Roberts suffered 10 fractures in her face in the assault, including her cheekbone, nose, sinus, and eye socket.</p> <p>But she said the moment she learned a suspect had been arrested, she said her sense of relief was bigger than the pain.</p> <p>“I feel OK to come back out here again,” she said. “I know that he’s not going to be walking by.”</p> <p>Detectives believe the same suspect was seen in King County Metro surveillance video Wednesday, December 6. The video shows the man getting up from his seat and kicking another woman in the head. She was also left with a serious concussion, and police said she was so stunned by the blow, she didn’t see the suspect, or call police until the next day.</p>

	<p>Police say the man wore the same clothes and shoes, and the two attacks happened a day apart.</p> <p>Roberts worked for years helping people in need. She founded an outreach group to help people on the streets, and before that, she was a nurse at Children's Hospital, caring for children with cancer.</p> <p>The woman who was kicked on the Metro Bus contacted Tracy with the help of police when the arrest was made.</p> <p>"She reached out to me earlier this morning so we've been talking, and she cried with joy when I'd told her he'd been arrested,"</p> <p>When people saw Tracy's story Tuesday, they contacted KIRO-7 saying they want to help her finish planting flower bulbs along Seattle's sidewalks.</p> <p>"Oh I'd love it," Roberts said. "I've got the container that I've got the rest of the bulbs in. I can't do it because I'm not allowed to sit and put my head down too much but, I'll come around and and, I'll help."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Seahawks security manager w/child porn</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/local/seattlenews/article/seahawks-aaron-miyasato-child-pornography-charges-15868892.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/local/seattlenews/article/seahawks-aaron-miyasato-child-pornography-charges-15868892.php</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">King County</a> prosecutors on Wednesday filed child pornography charges against a 41-year-old Renton man who spent the past 10 years working security for the <a href="#">Seattle Seahawks</a>.</p> <p>Aaron Miyasato, 41, faced two first-degree charges, one concerning the distribution of images of child exploitation and one concerning the possession of said images, according to court documents.</p> <p>Probable cause documents said detectives discovered on Friday that Miyasato — who they had been investigating since December 2020 — was a security official for the Seahawks. According to Miyasato's LinkedIn profile, he was a security manager.</p> <p>"We are aware of the situation and in accordance with the NFL personal conduct policy, we have notified the league of his arrest. This individual is no longer employed by our organization," read a statement from the Seahawks obtained by Seattle P-I.</p> <p>Seattle police detectives first started investigating Miyasato on Dec. 21, a little over a month after the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a tip that a Dropbox user, "Aaron Miyasato," had uploaded four images of children being sexually exploited.</p> <p>During the investigation, Dropbox provided files to detectives that Miyasato had allegedly uploaded. They contained explicit videos of children being sexually exploited. Days before they arrested him, detectives were provided with over 16,000 files of videos and images of exploited children that were associated with Miyasato's account, according to probable cause documents. He told detectives that he had about 25,000 files.</p> <p>After obtaining a warrant on Monday, members of Seattle Police SWAT and other officers arrested him in his Renton home at about 5 a.m., Tuesday.</p> <p>"These charges are the first Internet crimes against children case filed this year by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and it follows an unusually high number of cases filed</p>

	<p>in 2020," said Casey McNerthney, a spokesman for the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.</p> <p>In 2020, through Dec. 10, the office filed 64 cases regarding internet crimes against children. In 2019, the office filed 48 cases.</p> <p>Miyasato was arrested Tuesday, therefore didn't have a first appearance Wednesday when charges were filed, McNerthney said. His arraignment was set for Jan. 21 and he was held on \$50,000 bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 Ex-gov. Mich. charged in Flint water crisis</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/flint-water-crisis-rick-snyder-charges.html?action=click&amp;module=Top%20Stories&amp;pgtype=Homepage">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/flint-water-crisis-rick-snyder-charges.html?action=click&amp;module=Top%20Stories&amp;pgtype=Homepage</a>
GIST	<p>Rick Snyder, the former governor of Michigan who oversaw the state when a water crisis devastated the city of Flint, has been charged with two counts of willful neglect of duty, according to court records.</p> <p>The charges are misdemeanors punishable by imprisonment of up to one year or a maximum fine of \$1,000.</p> <p>Prosecutors in Michigan will report their findings in a wide-ranging investigation into the water crisis on Thursday, officials said, a long-awaited announcement that is also expected to include charges against several other officials and top advisers to Mr. Snyder.</p> <p>The findings will be announced by Dana Nessel, the Michigan attorney general, Fadwa Hammoud, the state's solicitor general, and Kym L. Worthy, Wayne County's top prosecutor.</p> <p>Charges had previously been filed in connection to the crisis, which began in 2014, but in June 2019, prosecutors stunned Flint by dropping all pending charges.</p> <p>Fifteen state and local officials, including emergency managers who ran the city and a member of the governor's cabinet, had been accused by state prosecutors of crimes as serious as involuntary manslaughter. Seven had already taken plea deals. Eight more, including most of the highest-ranking officials, were awaiting trial.</p> <p>Brian Lennon, a lawyer for Mr. Snyder, said on Wednesday evening, "We believe there is no evidence to support any criminal charges against Gov. Snyder."</p> <p>He added that lawyers for the former governor have sought a confirmation of charges — or a copy of them — but have yet to receive them from prosecutors.</p> <p>Randall Levine, a lawyer for Richard L. Baird, a former top adviser to Mr. Snyder, said on Tuesday that he was informed this week that Mr. Baird would be among the people facing charges connected to the water crisis.</p> <p>"At this time, we have not been made aware of what the charges are, or how they are related to his position with former Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's administration," Mr. Levine said. "Rich's relationship with the Flint community has always been strong. When the Flint water crisis hit, he wasn't assigned by Governor Snyder to go to Flint, but rather he raised his hand and volunteered."</p> <p>In 2016, Mr. Snyder offered an apology for what had happened, but for many residents in Flint, it did not go far enough.</p>

	<p>“He pushed this whole thing to the side, and he pushed people to the side,” said Floyd Bell, a Flint resident whose two small grandchildren were poisoned by lead when they were babies and still struggle developmentally. “If he was truly aware of what was going on, he should be held accountable.”</p> <p>Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a Flint pediatrician who warned officials about lead in the drinking supply, said that the prospect of new charges was a reminder that “accountability and justice are critical to health and recovery.”</p> <p>“This news is a salve, but it isn’t the end of the story,” she said in an email. “Healing wounds and restoring trust will take decades and long-term resources.”</p> <p>Melissa Mays, one of the first people in Flint to draw attention to the problems with the city’s water, said that given the silence from the attorney general’s office for more than 18 months, she was apprehensive that the charges would go far enough.</p> <p>“We in Flint have been living in prison for the past almost 7 years and being forced to pay for water that’s still being piped through corroded and damaged infrastructure in the streets and in our homes while the people responsible have been walking free,” she wrote in an email. “We in Flint deserve REAL justice and that means wealthy, white politicians and agency heads going to jail for their actions and inaction that’s caused so much harm and loss to us.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 More arrests; new calls riot investigation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/capitol-riot-investigation.html?action=click&amp;module=Spotlight&amp;pgtype=Homepage">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/capitol-riot-investigation.html?action=click&amp;module=Spotlight&amp;pgtype=Homepage</a>
GIST	<p>One week after an angry mob stormed the Capitol, Congress struggled on Wednesday to make sense of the most serious incursion on its home in more than two centuries as lawmakers called for new investigations and federal authorities fanned out across the country, taking into custody several more suspects, including two police officers from Virginia and a firefighter from Florida.</p> <p>The flurry of arrests and appeals for inquiry came as the House <a href="#">brought a historic second impeachment charge</a> against President Trump and federal law enforcement officials continued to examine whether the assault on the Capitol included coordinated efforts by small groups of extremists and was not merely a mass protest that spiraled out of control. All of this took place as official Washington remained in a defensive crouch, with much of the city surrounded by protective fencing and armed troops camped inside the Capitol complex.</p> <p>Led by Representative Mikie Sherrill, a New Jersey Democrat and former Navy pilot, more than 30 lawmakers called on Wednesday for an investigation into visitors’ access to the Capitol on the day before the riot. In a letter to the acting House and Senate sergeants-at-arms and the U.S. Capitol Police, the lawmakers, many of whom served in the military and said they were trained to “recognize suspicious activity,” demanded answers about what they described as an “extremely high number of outside groups” let into the Capitol on Jan. 5 at a time when most tours were restricted because of the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Separately, the inspector general’s office of the Capitol Police said it was opening a potentially wide-ranging inquiry into security breaches connected to the siege. The Government Accountability Office, a nonpartisan federal watchdog agency, signaled that it would look into what role, if any, members of Congress may have played in inciting the mob of Trump supporters who breached metal barricades and shattered windows on Jan. 6, seeking to overturn the results of the election.</p>



Banned last week from Twitter, Mr. Trump issued a brief statement on Wednesday, calling on Americans “to ease tensions and calm tempers.” But high-ranking officials, including some at the Pentagon, have maintained that they are profoundly worried about Inauguration Day, when President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. is scheduled to be sworn in.

Seeking to keep their local counterparts informed, Christopher A. Wray, the director of the F.B.I., and Kenneth T. Cuccinelli II, a senior official at the Homeland Security Department, briefed more than 5,000 law enforcement officials on Wednesday about potential threats across the country. They stressed in particular that violence could erupt this weekend [at all 50 state capitol buildings](#) around the country.

For the first time since the riot in Washington, Jeffrey A. Rosen, the acting attorney general, issued a public statement, saying in [a video](#) released overnight Tuesday that he would not tolerate violence or other any criminal behavior and that Mr. Biden would, like all of his predecessors, take office on Jan. 20 in a peaceful transition ceremony. Mr. Rosen also vowed to hold those who stormed the Capitol accountable for what he called an “intolerable, shocking and tragic episode,” and asked the public to share with the F.B.I. whatever it knows about the assault.

The federal investigation — an inquiry of widening scope that has already ensnared more than 70 people — continued apace on Wednesday as charges of disorderly conduct and entering a restricted space were filed against Officer Jacob Fracker and Sgt. Thomas Robertson, two members of the Rocky Mount Police Department in Virginia who attended the riot while off-duty.

According to a criminal complaint, the two men broke into the Capitol last week and posed for a photograph underneath a statue of John Stark, a Revolutionary War general, posting it on a social media. The complaint mentioned a subsequent post by Sergeant Robertson who wrote that the photo showed “2 men willing to actually put skin in the game and stand up for their rights.”

The Houston police chief, Art Acevedo, said in an interview on Wednesday that one of his officers, an 18-year veteran of the force, was also under investigation in connection to the Capitol attack and was likely to face charges.

“It absolutely is clear that he penetrated the Capitol,” Chief Acevedo said, “and we fully anticipate him being charged federally.”

Federal agents made more arrests on Wednesday in New York, Maryland, Texas and Florida, among them a firefighter from the town of Sanford, near Orlando. The firefighter, Andrew Williams, was charged with unlawful entry and disorderly conduct, and his lawyer, Vincent Citro, [told a Florida news channel](#) that Mr. Trump was to blame.

“The president and the Capitol Police encouraged despicable behavior,” Mr. Citro said. “Mr. Williams took part in none of it.”

New charges were filed as well against one of the most widely seen figures from the riot: a bearded man photographed inside the Capitol in a sweatshirt emblazoned with the logo “Camp Auschwitz.”

The man, Robert K. Packer, 56, was taken into custody in Newport News, Va., and was charged with unlawful entry and the disruption of official government business. In a complaint filed in Federal District Court in Washington, prosecutors said that a witness identified Mr. Packer because he wore the anti-Semitic sweatshirt regularly as he went about his errands in Newport News.

As more people are charged in connection with the attack, it has become clear that many of those who went to Washington last week were not only angry but heavily armed and, in some cases, dangerous. That point was driven home by court papers filed on Wednesday in the case of Cleveland G. Meredith Jr., who wrote in a text message that he wanted to put a bullet in the “noggin” of Speaker Nancy Pelosi on “live TV,” prosecutors said.

According to the papers, Mr. Meredith drove across the country with a Tavor X95 assault rifle, a 9 mm pistol painted to resemble an American flag and about 2,500 rounds of ammunition, including at least 320 armor-piercing 5.56 caliber rounds. Prosecutors say Mr. Meredith, who has a history of drug abuse and mental illness, also threatened to kill Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington.

“I may wander over to the Mayor’s office and put a 5.56 in her skull,” he wrote in a text message, the court papers said.

This mood of outrage found an echo in the tumultuous congressional debate on impeachment, which stretched throughout the day. The sense of recrimination went beyond the boundaries of Washington as local politicians in other states lobbed accusations at each other.

A group of Arizona state lawmakers [released a letter](#) on Wednesday that they had sent a day earlier to Mr. Rosen and Mr. Wray, calling for an investigation into two of their own colleagues, Mark Finchem and Anthony Kern, who, according to social media posts, were at the riot at the Capitol.

The lawmakers also mentioned that two congressmen from Arizona, Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs, both Republicans, had planned the rally that preceded the riot with the organizer of the so-called Stop the Steal movement, Ali Alexander. A spokesman for [Mr. Biggs has denied that he had any role in organizing the rally](#). Mr. Gosar appeared to be on friendly terms with Mr. Alexander, frequently tagging him in Twitter posts. At a rally last month outside the Arizona State Capitol at which Mr. Gosar spoke, Mr. Alexander called the congressman “the spirit animal of this movement.”

“It is vital to any current or future federal investigations, and ultimately to the Arizona public they represent, that we learn what these elected officials knew about this planned insurrection and when they knew it,” the letter from the lawmakers said.

A similar desire for answers — and for justice — was voiced by Representative Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat and Army veteran who led the call for the investigation into whether any of his colleagues in the House played a role in instigating the Capitol assault. At least five people died during the attack and accompanying protests.

“To the extent there were members of the House that were complicit, and I believe there were, we will pursue appropriate remedies including expulsion and a prohibition from holding elective office for the rest of their lives,” Mr. Crow said in an interview. “They will, of course, be subject to criminal investigation and prosecution if that’s what the facts of the investigation show.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-suspect-puerto-rico-policemen-killings-dead-75237221">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-suspect-puerto-rico-policemen-killings-dead-75237221</a>
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- The man being sought in the killing of three police officers is the person recently found shot to death with a cardboard sign on his chest declaring him guilty, Puerto Rican authorities announced Wednesday.</p> <p>Officials said they did not yet know who fatally shot the suspect, identified as 25-year-old David Rivera Bátiz. They said his death was being investigated as a possible street justice killing.</p> <p>“Police don’t have anything to do with the murder of this individual,” Antonio López Figueroa, the designated police commissioner, said in response to questions during a news conference.</p> <p>The suspect's body was found near a sprawling public housing complex in the popular tourist district of Isla Verde that authorities had been combing since the three officers were killed Monday.</p> <p>The deaths of state officer Luis Marrero Díaz and municipal officers Luis Salamán Conde and Eliezer Hernández Cartagena shocked the U.S. territory, where such slayings are rare. Police spokesman José Catalano told The Associated Press on Monday that two of the officers were fatally shot and the third was run over.</p> <p>López said Rivera was from the southern coastal city of Ponce and was suspected in several unrelated killings that occurred there.</p> <p>The three police officers were slain while involved in a case that began Monday afternoon in the northern city of Carolina, just east of the capital of San Juan.</p> <p>López said Rivera was initially involved in a car accident and pulled out a rifle when police arrived.</p> <p>“Without saying a word, he starts shooting,” López said.</p> <p>Rivera then tried to steal the motorcycle of one officer, but he failed and shot the officer, who was lying on the ground, López said. Rivera next hijacked a car from a civilian to get away and headed to Isla Verde, where he shot at officers waiting for him and then ran into a nearby public housing complex to hide, López said.</p> <p>His body was found before dawn Tuesday at a street corner on the other side of the highway from the housing complex. Authorities said the sign left on the body read: “I am responsible for the killing of the policeman(men). Here it is.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>01/13 SKorea upholds ex-president 20yrs prison</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korean-court-upholds-prison-term-president-park-75244132">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korean-court-upholds-prison-term-president-park-75244132</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea’s Supreme Court on Thursday upheld a 20-year prison term for former President Park Geun-hye over bribery and other crimes as it ended a historic corruption case that marked a striking fall from grace for the country’s first female leader and conservative icon.</p> <p>The ruling means Park, who was ousted from office and arrested in 2017, could potentially serve a combined 22 years behind bars, following a separate conviction for illegally meddling in her party’s candidate nominations ahead of parliamentary elections in 2016.</p> <p>But the finalizing of her prison term also makes her eligible for a special presidential pardon, a looming possibility as the country’s deeply split electorate approaches the next presidential election in March 2022.</p>

President Moon Jae-in, a liberal who won the presidential by-election following Park's removal, has yet to directly address the possibility of freeing his predecessor. Moon has recently seen his approval ratings sink to new lows over economic problems, political scandals and rising coronavirus infections.

Many conservative politicians have called for Moon to release Park and another convicted former president, Lee Myung-bak, who's serving a 17-year term over his own corruption charges. At least one prominent member of Moon's Democratic Party, Lee Nak-yeon, has endorsed the idea of pardoning the former presidents as a gesture for "national unity."

Park, 68, has described herself a victim of political revenge. She has refused to attend her trials since October 2017 and didn't attend Thursday's ruling. Her lawyer didn't return calls seeking comment.

The downfall of Park and Lee Myung-bak extended South Korea's decades-long streak of presidencies ending badly, fueling criticism that the country places too much power that is easily abused and often goes unchecked into the hands of elected leaders.

Nearly every former president, or their family members and aides, have been mired in scandals near the end of their terms or after they left office.

One president, Park's dictator father, Park Chung-hee, was assassinated by his spy chief in 1979. Another former president, Roh Moo-hyun, Moon's longtime friend and political mentor, leaped to his death in 2009 amid allegations that his family members took bribes from a businessman during his presidency.

Kang Min-seok, Moon's spokesperson, said the ruling on Park Geun-hye marked the "maturation and growth" of South Korea's democracy but added that the imprisonment of a former president over crimes is an "unfortunate" history that shouldn't be repeated. Presidential officials avoided specific answers when asked about the possibility of Moon pardoning Park and Lee.

Shin Young-dae, spokesperson of the Democratic Party, demanded Park to issue an apology over the "unwashable shame" she left to the country's history.

Park was convicted of colluding with her longtime confidante, Choi Soon-sil, to take millions of dollars in bribes and extortion money from some of the country's largest business groups, including Samsung, while she was in office from 2013 to 2016.

She was also indicted on charges of accepting illegally monthly funds from her spy chiefs that were diverted out of the agency's budget.

Following weekslong protests by millions, Park was impeached by lawmakers in December 2016 and officially removed from office in March 2017 after the Constitutional Court upheld the impeachment.

It wasn't immediately clear how Thursday's ruling would affect the legal saga of billionaire Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong. The 52-year-old vice chairman of Samsung Electronics is facing a ruling at the Seoul High Court next week in a retrial over charges that he bribed Park and Choi to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates that helped strengthen his control over the country's largest business group.

Prosecutors are seeking a nine-year prison term for Lee, who has been separately indicted on charges of stock price manipulation, breach of trust and auditing violations in relation to the merger. Lee's lawyers have portrayed him as a victim of presidential power abuse and described the 2015 deal was part of "normal business activity."

Choi is currently serving an 18-year prison sentence.

Park originally faced a prison term of more than 30 years before the Supreme Court sent her cases back to a lower court in 2019.

	<p>The Seoul High Court in 2018 had sentenced her to 25 years in prison after reviewing her of bribery, extortion, abuse of power and other convictions together.</p> <p>But the Supreme Court in October 2019 ordered the Seoul High Court to deal with Park's bribery charge separately from other charges, based on a law requiring so for cases involving a president or other elected officials, even when the alleged crimes are committed together.</p> <p>The High Court had handed Park a five-year term over the spy fund charges in July 2019, but the Supreme Court also ordered a retrial on the case in November, instructing the lower court to more broadly apply a charge of causing losses in state funds.</p> <p>Prosecutors appealed after the Seoul High Court handed Park a 20-year term in July last year after merging the two cases.</p> <p>If Park fully serves her sentence, she will be released in 2039 at the age of 87.</p>
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